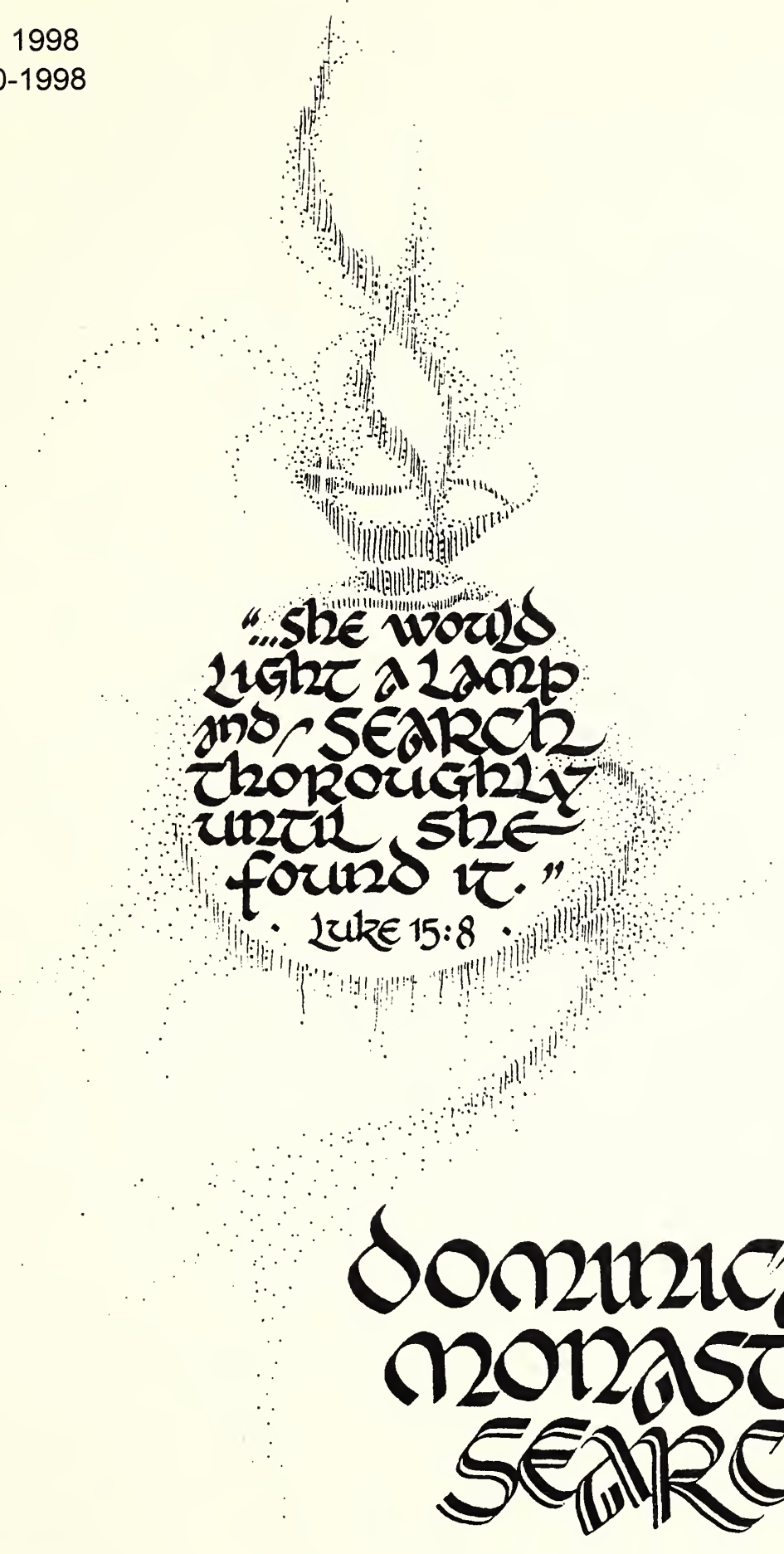


VOLUME 17, 1998
INDEX 1980-1998



"...she would
light a lamp
and SEARCH
thoroughly
until she
found it."

• Luke 15:8 •

dominican
monastic
SEARCH

DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH



Volume 17
Index 1980-1998

1998

DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH

Volume 17
1998

DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH is published by the Conference of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers of the United States of America. The Conference is an organization of independent monasteries whose purpose is to foster the monastic contemplative life of the nuns in the spirit of Saint Dominic.

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DOMINICAN MONASTIC SEARCH is a spiritual and theological review written by the nuns. Its purpose is to foster the Dominican monastic contemplative life by the sharing of insights gained from study and prayer. It is published once a year as a service to the nuns. It is also available to the wider Dominican Family and others upon request. A donation of \$8.00 to aid in the cost of printing would be appreciated, when possible.


Dominican Monastic Search welcomes all its readers to contribute articles for publication. We ask that manuscripts be prepared with concern for literary and intellectual quality. Appropriate subjects for DMS include scripture, theology, philosophy, spirituality, Dominican life, and the liberal arts insofar as they contribute to our Dominican vocation. Serious poetry reflective of these categories may also be submitted, though only a small amount can be used. A theme for each issue of DMS is usually announced in advance, but is not intended to limit the scope of articles. Before submitting a manuscript, please refer to the page of guidelines at the end of the most recent issue of Dominican Monastic Search.

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CONFERENCE OF NUNS OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS OF THE
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he has showed
you, ... what is
good,
and what
does the Lord require
 of you

But to do justice, and
to love kindness,

 and to
walk humbly with
your God?

Micah 6:8 (RSV)



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EDITORIAL

Response to the invitation of chief editor Sister Dominic to contribute to this 1998 issue of *DMS* has been very satisfying: nine monasteries are represented, six of these by more than one contribution. The millennium theme, *Holy Spirit*, is explicit in one paper, and implicit in the welcome variety of topics offered us in others.

The papers varied in their origins: a homily during Divine Office, assignments in the Theological Formation Program, long study of the Constitutions, committee work for a region of the Order, attention to personal psychological development, reflection on one of our heroes (John Baptist) and on one of our favorite monastic themes (freedom). And so of course the formats vary: we find here poetry, transcription of the spoken word, and short story, as well as "articles" in the usual sense.

A new feature in this issue is co-editor Sister Susan Early's *Index* of all the articles of *Dominican Monastic Search* (that is, from 1980 through 1998) — a good idea effectively carried out in a first part now ready: the listing according to authors of all *DMS* contributions to date. She plans to follow this with an arrangement according to topics.

Perhaps a possibility for *DMS* in the future — a Reader Response section — is hinted at by one article in this 1998 issue? It incorporates in its Notes the response of Québec artist Louis Belzile to reflections about a painting of his.

A recent stay for Retreat at the Elmira monastery has given me a vivid awareness of the immense care with which Sister Dominic has been handling our work, not only by her fax and phone visits to encourage and advise us on content, but also in an enormous hidden technical work which brings our manuscripts into a consistent format for each issue. I am sure we would be amazed if we could have the opportunity to catch sight also of the work of Business Manager Sister Mary Catharine (Summit) who oversees the passage of copy through the printing, binding and distribution stages.

When we write for *DMS*, we find that the possibility of interchange about our articles within our own houses, and with other nuns when we write to them or travel between monasteries, is a precious aspect of the existence of such a Journal — second only to the opportunity *DMS* gives us to follow the lead of our sisters as they take us through some of their most important reflections. Blessed be God in His gifts!

Sister Mary of the Savior
Farmington Hills, MI
Co-editor

CONTEMPLATIVE LIFE FOR WOMEN IN THE CHURCH TODAY:

one nun's opinion¹

Sr. Mary of the Savior, O.P.
Farmington Hills, MI

A friend of mine has a saying about the contemplative state of life: "In any age, the cloister is microcosm of the Church's experience." Her view I find enlightening. And I suggest that the experience of nuns today includes these notable components: elements not unlike atheism and polytheism; a tension between passivity and participation; a learner's delicate role; communal service as Singer. If my friend is correct, the contemporary Church features those components also, and increased understanding of the Church may come from paying some attention to nuns.

Two clarifications of context are in order:

It is understood here (thanks to the lucidity of Vatican II on this point) that contemplation is the common vocation, but that it can be nurtured in some people by a particular way of life (cf. LCM 94: "Everything is ordered to continual remembrance of God" [94]).

And I am accustomed to thinking of the contemplative life of "active religious" in terms of the idea of "merging horizons" which the author of "Rethinking the Religious State" borrows from Lonergan's later work²: the focus of the realm of transcendence merges with that of one or more other worlds of human interests and tasks, in the one same consciousness.

I.

"You, O Lord, are king over all the gods" (Psalm 95).

A main task and lived fact of contemplative life is increasing response to divine transcendence and immanence. The always-going-beyond the shape of any present awareness of God, and the relentless breaking-in of the ordinariness of life, come together in a puzzling dialectic. This ambiguous experience of the sacred puts contemplative life in vivid contact with worlds and consciousnesses in which no-God is affirmed.

I once heard a visiting preacher dismiss Karl Rahner's work as inappropriate for nuns' reading because Rahner addressed problems in contemporary consciousness, including atheism. How can there be, in such work, the right harmonics for nuns, given their overtly religious and committed lives? — so ran the argument in all its insensitivity. But nuns, like all believers, live through many breakthroughs and disintegrations in

their religious consciousness. Their prayer is often deprived of form or comfort. They live in poignant awareness of human joy and human suffering, given their "occupation," in their intercessory communities, both of abetting the good and of recognizing every kind of sad human need. According to at least one Ritual, on the day of each nun's Solemn Profession the People of God pray: "May she look upon the world and see it ruled by God's loving wisdom," a request which asks for no small effect of Resurrection-grace. The journey of Thérèse of Lisieux, as Simon Tugwell points out in his *Ways of Imperfection*,³ was rather more a descent of Mount Carmel than some enthusiastic pieties would expect.

Another fact of contemporary contemplative consciousness is a becoming-aware that one's own religion today is not that of yesterday; that there is a history of one's life with God; that, even in a single consciousness, the past is strewn with dead gods; that one has somehow been polytheist in a way which, as Eric Voegelin saw, cannot be repudiated totally without denying the One who comes toward us in our own history: "...the succession of gods becomes a series of events to be remembered as the history of the Parousia of the Beyond."⁴ Trying to follow Jesus in such a history, nuns continue their search for God.

Of the Church's contemporary experience,
<microcosm.>

II.

Passivity and participation.

The experience of persons in contemplative life seems to run easily in a passive mode. Whatever their social or business competence, whatever their energy for art or liturgy or government, their way of life comes to them, day after day, as an increasing receptivity. Their withdrawal, and their particular style of vowed obedience, poverty and chastity, are meant to bring them as directly as possible into recognition of pervasive Mystery, with the appropriate yielding of control. The experience is common — and in cloisters only intensified — that, over the years, "You lead me and guide me"; "I am being shaped." Besides, body-spirit's experience of aging is becoming increasingly communal (with older vocations and ascending median-age) and gives a new range for practice in the welcoming of grace. Eventually, all believers know for themselves what the elderly Lonergan meant:

Experience of grace, then, is as large as the Christian experience of life....It is experience of a transformation one did not bring about but rather underwent, as divine providence let evil take its course and vertical finality be heightened, as it let one's circumstances shift, one's dispositions change, new encounters occur, and — so gently and quietly — one's heart be touched.⁵

And yet.... And yet....

Recent revisions of nuns' Constitutions books carry exhortations to them to participate: in decision-making, in governing, in departmental roles, in dialogue with companions.

While the "solitude of the cell" is being urged upon them, they also hear Refectory reading which recommends conversation as "the thread of civilization."

As women they are urged to "find" their voice⁶ at the same time as they are learning to silence it.

They may glimpse that their continuing education, to be adequate, needs to be "gender-sensitive."

All of these are delicate moments in the formation of nuns. They live, as part of their experience of Church, some of the tensions of the marginalized: the aged; women; the poor. Like daughters (cf. *Hebrews* 5) they learn obedience through suffering.

<microcosm>

III.

Delicate learning.

Nuns' Constitutions describe them as "free for God." In most Dominican communities, freedom to "seek His Face" – engaging the whole body-spirit – receives special aid from a tradition of study, much as the Catholic Worker tradition of contemplation involves unremitting "clarification of thought." (Peter Maurin cited St.. Dominic's example.⁷) The study is scriptural and theological chiefly, and whatever else serves personal and communal life-goals. (S. Tugwell's "Scholarship, Sanctity and Spirituality"⁸ counters the fears sometimes associated with intellectual life.) The dialectic of intelligent inquiry and committed choice offers appropriate response to Mystery – as ultimate, and as operative in the universe. Inquiry follows, without fear, where questions lead.

And yet....

Novitiate members ask what the freedom spoken of in their Constitutions "looks like" in practice.

Appreciative of the strength of those who are faithfully obedient, day by day, "without useless questioning," they wonder: whence come the resources for saying "yes," and also for saying "no" – as St. Albert seems to have been able to do in spite of his Master General's insistence that acceptance of a bishopric would disgrace the Dominican Order. Some writers urge upon all religious, because of their witness as persons of the Church, the foregoing of dissent; but for the very same reason, other writers urge them to give example where necessary. Discretion is always the important

context for dissent, as a cloistered community learns with special poignancy. Whole communities may have to learn, time and again, the priority of education for discernment. They may need practice in the art, the hard work, of sorting out the important issues and the important moments. The real issue in such practice, and in careful thought on authority, on assent and dissent within community, is a contemplative one: the issue of proper response to Mystery.

Interplay of: love-for-truth/fear/inertia/discernment.

<microcosm>

IV.

The Singers.

Thérèse's "I will be Love at the heart of the Church" has for a century fostered or expressed the vocation of many who have been in a contemplative way of life. It has helped contemporary women and men as they agonized over their personal life-response to social needs and injustices.

Given the global consciousness available these days (George Tavard writes even of our inter-galactic consciousness⁹), Thérèse's choice might be described in new ways, which in turn might transform the choice, alter the timbre of it. It might be called, for example, "love for the universe," in terms similar to those which Lonergan used:

...to will the order of the universe because of one's love of God is to love all persons in the universe because of one's love of God. ...[G]ood will....is at one with the universe in being in love with God, and it shares its dynamic resiliency and expectancy.¹⁰

Or:

Much of organized contemplative life is given over to public praise; so, choice of a contemplative way might be described as the choice of being a Singer.

A little "vocalise" for this suggestion might be to recall what we have heard about the "songlines" of Australian aboriginals.¹¹ It seems that each child, each infant in the womb, receives a part of the Song the Ancestor has sung over the whole world/the whole country. The child holds her or his stanzas as private property — as part of the Song that lies over the ground in an unbroken chain of couplets. No one is landless.

This is not the territorial singing of birds — blocking off, hemming in by frontiers — but a network of lines, of ways through. (Where to be able to move is survival — in times of drought, for example — feeling "at home" in a place depends on being able to leave it in a crisis. Everyone hopes to have at least four "ways out," we are told.) There are no frontiers; only "stops," that is, handover points: each stop is where the song passes from one ownership to another.

Eric Voegelin thought it a significant moment in human history when a Greek poet, perhaps a century after Homer, turned his attention to a communal role which was not that of Seer but of Singer. The Singer remembers. And s/he has reflective distance, which opens "consciousness for the process of reality as an unfinished story."¹²

For those who rest in the Eucharist as perfect remembering and perfect worship, the transformation of Thérèse's expression might be:

I will be the remembering Singer at the heart of the universe.

And they would think of Mary, first Chantress of the New Covenant....¹³

< microcosm >

▷◁

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this article was published in *Sisters Today* 62 (July 4, 1990): 243-247.
2. F. E. Crowe, S.J., "Rethinking the Religious State: Categories from Lonergan," *Science et Esprit* XL/1(1988): 75-90. Cf. Lonergan's "Merging Horizons: System, Common Sense, Scholarship," a 1970 lecture published in *Cultural Hermeneutics* 1 (1973): 87-99.
3. S. Tugwell, O.P., *Ways of Imperfection* (Springfield, Illinois: Templegate Pubs., 1985): 228.
4. Eric Voegelin, *Order and History*, vol. V: *In Search of Order* (Baton Rouge, LA, and London: Louisiana State U. Press, 1987), 68. Cf. also 98-99.
5. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., "Mission and Spirit," *A Third Collection* (Mahwah, NJ.: Paulist Press, 1985), 32-33.
6. Cf. J. R. Martin, *Reclaiming a Conversation: the Ideal of the Educated Woman* (New Haven, CT.: Yale U. Press, 1985).
7. Cf. Katharine Temple, "Intellectual Life in the City, by three Catholic Workers," *ARIL* (Oct. 1989): 28.
8. In *Communio* XI,1 (Spring, 1984): 46-59.
9. In his *les jardins de Saint Augustin: lecture de confessions* (Montréal et Paris: Bellarmin-Cerf, 1988). See especially 115-134.
10. B. J. Lonergan, S.J., *Insight* (New York, NY: Philosophical Library, 1960), 698, 700 (and *Collected Works* vol. 3).
11. Cf. Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines* (New York, NY: Viking Press, 1987), 56-59.
12. Eric Voegelin, *op. cit.*, 69;86.
13. This is a favorite phrase of one of my sisters in community.

DOMINICAN VOCATION —IN A WORD

a Vespers homily
on *James* 5:7

Sr. Mary of the Trinity, O.P.
Farmington Hills, MI

We have been busy of late reflecting on our mission as Dominican Nuns. It was a challenge to write a Mission Statement that stayed within the boundaries of two to four sentences. Now what if you were asked to describe your vocation in one word. What would you say? What word would you choose?

Many of you are probably guessing that my word is "remember-er." "The whole of the nuns' life is harmoniously ordered to the continual remembrance of God" (LCM 74, IV). But I realized during Advent this year that the theme of remembering that has been so important for me these past twelve years is shifting. Today I might not say remembering but waiting...waiting. And perhaps I would describe a Dominican Nun as a "wait-er."

It seems to me that monastic life with its unrelenting rhythm of prayer, work, and study expresses very concretely what it means to wait for the Lord's return. We are waiters because we are remember-ers. Day after day, year after year, decade upon decade, we watch for the Lord. We have chosen to forego most other waitings or anticipations for the "one waiting."

We forego the daily waiting for a spouse's return at the end of a work day, to await the Divine Spouse.

We choose to forego the waiting for a first child, for promotions, trips, retirement—there is no retiring from remembering—and yet even if our memories fail us, we continue to watch and wait.

To forego the anticipations, the waitings, that our contemporary culture covets does not mean that we might not fill up our lives with waitings of our own creation. Isn't it easy to get overly caught in waiting for things like: Who will the next prioress be? What will my next work assignment be? Or perhaps something as mundane as: When will the places in choir be changed? My neighbor is driving me crazy!

It seems to me that monastic life with its calculated sameness is meant to hone and sharpen our ability to vigil....to watch....to wait.

Waiting seems at first glance like such a passive thing. Yet one has only to recall a few instances of waiting to remember how intense an activity it can be. 'Anyone recall waiting for a first date? first job? acceptance for Profession?

Monks and nuns often describe their life as a *search* for God. But as you live the life into a second, third, fourth, or fifth decade, perhaps you would agree that a better description might be that monks and nuns are *waiting* for God?

Simone Weil, in her "Essay on the Implicit Love of God,"¹ speaks about the call to wait:

Active searching is prejudicial, not only to love, but also to the intelligence, whose laws are the same as those of love. We have to wait for the solution of a geometrical problem or the meaning of a Latin or Greek sentence to come into our mind. Still more we wait for any new scientific truth or for a beautiful line of poetry. Seeking leads us astray. This is the case with every form of what is truly good. We should do nothing but wait for the good and keep evil away. ... This waiting for goodness and truth is, however, something more intense than any searching.

Often our waiting is an expression of our desire. We wait for what we desire, what we want. As I observe life in the monastery, I see that perhaps one of the advantages of growing older is that the diminishment of the aging process seems to simplify our wants and desires. Sister Mary Anastasia, when she was the eldest among us, once said, "After ninety, life becomes much simpler." Maybe that's because our desires begin to become more totally focused on waiting for the Bridegroom.

Sebastian Moore, in his book *Let This Mind Be In You*,² speaks about God's bringing us to a state of desirelessness. He explains that it is a kind of desire before desire. Perhaps we've all had instances or flashes of this experience —when what we desire is not this or that. We desire. But we know not what. Maybe what we desire is Being itself —perhaps it is a flash of pure desire for God.

And haven't we witnessed the phenomenon of "desire before desire" overtaking some of our sisters near the end of their lives? Remember Sr. Mary of the Precious Blood, calling out the name of Jesus day and night for almost the whole last year of her life? And remember when Sr. Mary Agnes would break into "O that Thou wouldst part the clouds..."? And these past months we have waited and watched with our brother, Father Richard,³ as his life simplified and his desire focused into one longing and waiting for heaven.

Recently we had a reading from St. Ambrose's tract "On Virginity"⁴ in which he says:

You are one of God's people, of God's family, a virgin among virgins; you light up your grace of body with your splendor of soul. More than

others you can be compared to the Church. When you are in your room then, at night, think always on Christ, and wait for his coming at every moment.

Saint Ambrose puts the challenge to us boldly: "Think always on Christ, and wait for his coming at every moment." Are we up to the challenge? b4

NOTES

1. In *Waiting for God* (New York, N.Y.: Harper and Row, 1951), 196-197.
2. Sebastian Moore, *Let this Mind Be In You* (New York, N.Y.: Seabury, 1985).
3. The reference is to the monastery's chaplain, then dying: Fr. Richard Weber, O.P..
4. Chap. 12, 68 (PL 16, 281). Cf. *The Liturgy of the Hours* (New York: Catholic Publishing Company, 1975), vol. I (Dec. 13), 1242-1243.

Moment of Rebirth

❖ Candle flickering
Candle burning,
Candle melting.

❖ Light of our way,
Light of the eye,
Jesus Christ!

Sister Mary Jordan, O.P.
Los Angeles

IN JOURNEYING OFTEN

Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart, O.P.
Menlo Park, CA

The dictionary tells us that an itinerant is one who travels from place to place. Many people today travel for the sake of traveling itself. Some go about in motor homes. Some are vagrants, unable to settle down and build a life for themselves. Ours is probably the most mobile society that the world has ever known. But when we examine the nature of itinerancy in the Order we see that its inspiration is based on the nature of the Apostolic life, that is, the life of Christ and the Apostles. We know that they did travel from place to place, back and forth in what has become the Holy Land. But the important thing is why did they travel? It was to bring the Good News to the people of Palestine and then to those beyond the Holy Land.

Why do Dominicans travel today? The answer, of course, is to fulfill the command of Christ to preach the gospel to all nations. This preaching is for the salvation of souls. In order to bring the gospel to all people it was and is necessary to travel to those people. It is for the Friars, Sisters and Laity of the Order to do the preaching and teaching in the active literal sense of the words. But as Dominicans we, too, have a share in this apostolate¹. Yes, it is hidden, quiet, spiritual, contemplative, and many times it is simply a presence which by its very existence speaks to others of God, His beauty, His love, His companionship with us on our way. This explains in a nutshell the apostolic itinerancy which is an essential part of the spirituality of all Dominicans.

In the 13th Century wandering monks were certainly not unknown.² They were in fact a thorn in the side of the Church for they had left their monasteries and struck out on their own with no guidance and were subject to no authority. They often strayed from the safe path of truth and led others astray. There is a risk that free itinerant preachers, untrained in doctrine and not subject to obedience, will be unstable and fall into schism and even heresy. There were the Waldenses and the Cathari to prove this. It was hardly imaginable in the 13th century that itinerant and mendicant preaching could furnish a plan for a solid and balanced Catholic movement. It was the genius of St. Dominic to show by personal experience that a community-based institution was not only possible but indispensable for a totally apostolic preaching. At the time of the approval of the Order, St. Dominic received a vision of Sts. Peter and Paul and St. Peter said to him. "Go and preach for you have been sent."³ And that implied that he must be on the move. It was a new thing that an entire Order be appointed to assist the hierarchy in the preaching of the gospel. And we are still unique among all orders in this regard.

St. Paul says, "they will never have a preacher unless one is sent" (Rom 10:15). Those who travel to preach must be sent in the name of the Church, the Body of Christ,

and not in their own name or on their own authority. Official preaching requires authorization which demands obedience to and service of the Church. The purpose of this preaching is the salvation of souls and therefore all that aids or enables the salvation of souls is united to the preaching.

Ultimately, itinerant preaching is rooted in the Mystery of the Holy Trinity in which there is the eternal procession of the Word going out from the Father and returning to Him through the Holy Spirit. This is mirrored by the preacher going forth from the bosom of the Church and returning again to that same center.

But how can the nuns who have been given the observance of enclosure participate in this mission of itinerant preaching? We know that St. Dominic founded the monastery of nuns at Prouille before he organized the brethren. This was a demonstration of his fundamental belief that prayer was the absolutely necessary infrastructure for the work of preaching. He knew that the graces needed for the friars' work to be fruitful would be wanting without the constant intercession of those dedicated to this facet of the apostolate. He even judged it more important than the work of the brothers who managed the bookkeeping, house maintenance, and cooking. Following his example the Friars have always tried to have monasteries of nuns established in each country where they set up a base for the apostolic work. Since the vocation to the strictly contemplative life is more rare than that to the active or mixed life, it has not always been possible to carry out this plan. But it is still an ideal.

Besides the life of prayer there are several other ways that the cloistered nuns can participate in the itinerancy of their active brothers and sisters. There is the mission of writing in which the message of God goes out to the world through the means of communication. Dominic was a creative thinker and would use every method of proclaiming the truth that culture provided. In our own day the new means of communication have opened many things for us, including travel on the information highway. A presence on the World Wide Web which could be fruitful for souls may become available for some nuns. But there are other and more traditional ways. Our foundresses were in every case following the call of itinerancy. They very literally moved from one location to another to bring to the people of a different region the gospel as lived out in Dominican Contemplative life. At times it was a few Sisters who left their monastery, their families, even their homeland, to multiply the places where we could be a witness to the gospel. At other times it was an entire monastery that moved to a location where there might be a better acceptance of the life.

Our Constitutions allow a Sister to go to another monastery to discharge an office such as Prioress, Infirmarian, etc., or to learn or teach a needed skill, or to help out in time of need. We have experienced this in our own monastery with the visits of two Sisters. Sister Miriam of Elmira came to us as a temporary Prioress and Sister Mary of the Immaculate Conception of West Springfield spent three months with us helping in many departments. Other monasteries have had the experience of one or more of

their Sisters spending time in a monastery of one of the European or Third World countries.

It might be said that it is the whole community that is itinerant when a nun goes on a foundation or to help out in another monastery. Certainly in order for one sister to be spared everyone else must shift, move, spread herself over more territory to cover the place left by the absent one.

Dominican government provides yet another aspect of itinerancy. Our prioresses are elected for a specific term and the Constitutions determine that there is a limit to the number of times they may be re-elected. As Fr. Timothy pointed out in his recent letter to the Order⁴, this is to prevent any possibility of the idea of a career in administration. It is not a lifetime position as in the Benedictine tradition, but a temporary opportunity to minister to our sisters after which we move on to another service in the community.

Still there are many of us who will never go from one country or monastery to another. How can we participate in the itinerancy of our Order? If we accept the definition of an itinerant preacher as one who moves from one place to another for the salvation of souls, then we can see that as we move from one department of our monastery to another we are supporting the life of the monastery and therefore working for the salvation of souls. Our change of charges every three years is a new "mission" to a work that enables the monastery to exist. And that existence supports the life of prayer that is necessary for the graces of conversion needed by those who hear the preaching. My moving from work in the kitchen to sacristy, from altar bread room to laundry, may not be the preaching of words, but it is fruitful in many graces for those in need. And it requires the same detachment and poverty that the traveling of the brethren requires of them, for women by nature have a tendency to "nest," to settle down comfortably and make a "place" for themselves. When we are regularly uprooted and sent to another monastic challenge, we do participate in itinerancy.

In an insightful article comparing the stability of Benedictines with the itinerancy of Dominicans⁵, Fr. Brian Pierce coins the phrase "asceticism of no-where" to describe stability which is *going no-where* as well as itinerancy which is *staying no-where*. We cloistered nuns have a part in both traditions.

The charism of itinerancy is what I might call the support system for Poverty. It nurtures a detachment from persons, places and things. It prevents us from setting up our own little kingdom where we are in control. If I may be called tomorrow to serve the Lord in another place, I may not be so tempted to collect handy little objects, or develop a "need" for a particular relationship, or consider this "my" space. This charism gives us an openness to God, to our sisters, to new theological opinions and new ways of understanding the gospel. It reflects the openness of Mary at the Annunciation, the freedom to say "yes" when God calls in a new and unexpected way.

On the other hand the charism of stability can be seen as the mainstay of recollection. It is a standing still to see God in the present moment. It fosters fidelity and endurance, the willingness to face the desert experience, the dark nights, the individual spiritual as well as communal storms. Stability helps us to stick with our community when the going gets rough and when life seems dull. It is the stuff of which martyrdom is made and mirrors Our Lady at the foot of the Cross.

It is an occupational hazard for cloistered nuns to become turned in on themselves, unaware and insensitive to those around them. An itinerant outlook is a protection against this. But a similar hazard is a restlessness, a seeking for excitement, an avoidance of the inner life. And to prevent this we need a monastic stability in our inner life.

Our life as cloistered Dominicans might be compared to a tight-rope walker carrying a balancing rod marked "Monastic Stability" on one end, and "Apostolic Itinerancy" on the other. If too much weight is allowed on either end, we lose our footing and fall down in one aspect of our calling.

The monastic view of our life demands our observance of silence, periods of solitude, study, *Lectio*, prayer of intercession, of praise, works of reparation and all forms of asceticism. It explains our enclosure and our need for leisure.

The apostolic outlook on our vocation requires preaching. But that preaching does not have to be in the strict sense. The motto for the entire Order is "*Contemplata aliis tradere*." Some in the Order may do it from a pulpit, some from a street-corner, and some from a teacher's rostrum. Some write books and articles or translate what others have written. A few preach by painting or other artistic enterprises, some by composing music or poetry. The daily liturgy in our chapels is a form of preaching *par excellence*. And what about preaching by our very life? We preach to each other in every moment and in every word and action of our day. So we have to continually ask ourselves whether we are preaching the Good News or heresy.

There have been some interesting experiments among our monasteries in France and Italy in the last few years to blend the two facets into a harmonious whole, not only spiritually but also publicly. History will tell us whether the courage to risk these experiments has been fruitful.

As a community we are preaching by our existence to all who come to know of our presence in the monastery. The fact that these normal American women are willing to forgo most of the pleasures that ordinary women may enjoy, because they are head-over-heels in love with God, is preaching loud and clear. Every person to whom we speak on the phone or in the parlor, to whom we write, or who drives by our monastery is hearing what we preach.

In the last days of our life many of us will be "missioned" to a hospital or rest home and again we will bring to those who care for us the message of the beauty of a life lived in union with God. The beautiful serenity of our elderly and infirm sisters tells

a wonderful story. When they must be moved to a facility where they can receive better care than we are able to provide in the monastery it is inspiring to see how they can accept the change by lovingly embracing the will of God for them. It shows us that Dominican Contemplative Life does indeed work by bringing each of us to the point where we have no abiding city because "in God alone is my soul at rest" (Ps. 62:1).

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NOTES

1. Cf. Fundamental Constitution of the Nuns, 1.II.
2. Even in St. Benedict's time the gyrovagues were a scandal in the Church and the world. Cf. *RB 1980* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1981), p. 170.
3. William Hinnebusch, O.P., *The History of the Dominican Order* (Staten Island: Alba House, 1966), Vol 1, p. 49.
4. Timothy Radcliffe, O.P., "Dominican Freedom and Responsibility", *IDI*, July-August 1997, p. 149.
5. Brian Pierce, O.P., "Itinerancy, Stability, and the Freedom of No-Where", *Review for Religious*, Nov-Dec 1997, pp. 623-635.

FREEDOM FOR GOD - FREEDOM IN COMMUNION

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This article is a combination of study and personal reflection generated by many wonderful years of Dominican living. It is a study that has ripened into a love and gratitude for the wisdom St. Dominic and the first Friars incorporated into our legislative structure. Our governmental structures sustain a way of life that is essentially communitarian. LCM best captures this spirit when the Fundamental Constitution of the Nuns states that the nuns pursue "communion through their manner of government" (FC, V). It is faithfulness to this spirit of government that will allow the nuns to prosper with fidelity in the following of Christ, in the Spirit of St. Dominic. We truly must understand Dominican government if we are to be authentic Dominicans.

DOMINIC'S FREEDOM AND FREEDOM IN LCM

St. Dominic "is a man of freedom and government."¹ Fr. Timothy asks: "How can we renew today the freedom that is properly and deeply Dominican?" The first step in answering this question is to pose another. What was it that made St. Dominic free? He was a man of freedom because he was a truly obedient man. In the process of Canonization we are told that he humbly subjected himself to the decisions and laws "which the General Chapter of the brethren made after mature deliberation" (LCM 17:1). We are also told that once he came to a decision after due consideration he did not change his mind. This was possible because St. Dominic was a man obedient to God, one who listened attentively to the Word and was directed by the Spirit of God. His obedient freedom found its source in his love for Jesus Christ, a love that gave impetus to all that he did and made him free to embrace the future, the present task and whatever challenges came his way. When we dare to exercise that same obedience, an obedient listening to God, to the Word, and to our sisters then we too as individuals and as communities will possess the same freedom. LCM puts freedom in this context: a freedom for God and a freedom to be transformed into Christ for the salvation of ourselves and others. Like the Friars, our freedom is Gospel freedom, the freedom of the Word, and it is directed toward the end of the Order which is the salvation of all.

Our values are rooted in the Gospel and the following of Christ. Our observances foster a particular way of life that will enable us "to follow Christ more closely" and help us "to live more effectively [our] contemplative life in the Order of Preachers" (LCM 35:1). The determination to consciously follow Christ and live the contemplative life as Dominicans is the underlying value which gives meaning to the structures of our life. Our goal is union with Jesus Christ begun now and brought to perfection in eternal communion with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is important never to lose sight of this reality.

The phrase, "Free for God alone," is one of the most familiar of our Constitutions. What does it mean in the context of our "way of life" to be free for God alone? The ultimate goal of freedom toward which the observances are directed is participation in the communion of the Trinity. A communion which is a sharing in that movement of life and love that is God's very existence as One and Three. The proximate goal is our communion of life and love with our sisters through Jesus, the Incarnate Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

To be "free for God alone" is to enter into a way of loving and self-giving. LCM brings this out in the context of the gift our vows and communal living. By means of a faithful embracing of the observances as a way of life we are **freed from** our sinful and imperfect existence and become **free for** God. It is an on-going process of conversion. Our consecration to God is a consecration to love, a love that is fixed in God, through Jesus Christ, and images God's love by loving all that God loves with a free and benevolent love. Our communion with one another is a Trinitarian reality. It is to become with our sisters a communion of love that expresses the self-giving of Christ. Jesus' self-giving is the perfect reflection of the self-giving love that is the life of the Triune God. Therefore, to be free for God alone is to be members of Christ, gifted individually by the Spirit, and formed into a communion that images the reciprocal love of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (LCM 4:1). Thus we are called to become one in mind and heart in God (LCM 2:1). This communion transcends the limits of our individual monasteries and "attains its fullness in communion with the Order" and the Church (LCM 2:11). Our communion is possible only by God's gift (LCM 1:V). It is founded in the Spirit through whom we receive the Word from the Father (LCM 3:1). In the Spirit we are made one body. Finally, our monastery becomes a "center of true communion" in that we recognize and cherish one another as members of Christ, animated by the One Spirit (LCM 4:1). This is the spirituality that undergirds our governmental structure of shared responsibility and participation in the common life.

St. Dominic's love for sinners and his special concern to bring the Word of salvation to others is reflected in the structure of the Order. He wanted the Constitutions to express the gentle-loving compassion of the Word while also being a structure of life that would lead to perfection. He did not want it to bind under sin. "Enlightened by me, the true light, he was providing for those who were less perfect. For, though all who observe the rule are perfect, still even in [this way of] life one is more perfect than another, and both the perfect and the not-so-perfect fare well on this ship."² Commenting on this text from the *Dialogue*, Fr. Timothy writes: "The Order is a home for sinners . . . Our system of government ultimately is grounded upon a search for virtue."³ Our freedom is grounded in our basic acceptance of our humanity and in the overpowering hope of God's grace and salvific action in our lives and the lives of others.

FREEDOM IN SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

LCM tells us that we pursue communion through our manner of government. Our governmental structure is the primary means for building community. In our tradition because of the communitarian nature of our life, authority is an exercise of shared responsibility. The great wisdom of our governmental tradition lies in its balance and distribution of responsibility. Fr. Malachy O'Dwyer writes: "unless we understand the laws, the norms, which govern our relationships within the family of St. Dominic and within each of its parts, it is very difficult to have a true understanding of the vision which St. Dominic had when he founded the Order."⁴

In LCM the order of authority is the Prioress, the Chapter and the Council. The Prioress is the ultimate authority in the community but her authority is exercised in the spirit of St. Dominic and seen in its relationship to the Chapter, the Council and the whole spirit of Dominican government as presented in LCM.⁵ Because of the communal nature of our tradition the role of no one person within the community should dominate or be overemphasized, even that of the Prioress. "We must neither exaggerate nor underplay the role of the prioress, council or chapter, but must be faithful to the Constitutions which give each a specific competence."⁶ The authority of the Prioress and the authority of the Chapter should not be pitted against one another. Each of the components of government exists to bring to realization our communion in the Spirit. We need to have a clear understanding of the balance of the elements of government as envisioned by St. Dominic and the first Friars. ". . . If one or the other 'authority' within the community does not function properly, in the long run, neither will the community."⁷

Accountability has always been part of the Dominican tradition of government. Every member of the community including the leadership is called to a listening obedience to the Spirit who directs the community toward the specific ends of Dominican monastic life. Our obedience is the "principle of unity" by which we are bound together in the common pursuit of our purpose and end. The Prioress, the Chapter and the Council are all accountable for our common mission. Each component of government serves as a measure of accountability for the other. Each has a responsibility to take seriously their accountability for the common good. By her election the Prioress has been given a special role in fostering unity of mind and heart and common observance. But every member, in whatever role they serve within the community, has the responsibility of fostering unity, common observance, faithfulness to our common life, and to the strengthening of our communion. The right exercise of Dominican government fosters such responsibility. This is the unique spirit of Dominican government. LCM 20:1 reads: "The common good, which obedience preserves, also requires that the prioress willingly listen to the nuns. Especially in matters of greater importance, she should seek their views without prejudice however to her authority to make the final decision." The use of the Prioress' authority is not arbitrary. It is always exercised with a view to the common good and our common mission within the Order. Each member of the community, similarly, is called to obedience because we directed our wills to a common goal in choosing to follow a particular way of life. Herbert McCabe, O.P. writes:

... in our communities obedience is as much a matter for the Prior [or Prioress] as it is for the rest. A Prior [or Prioress] who sets himself [herself] outside the common mind of the community, a superior who simply follows his/her own will rather than entering into the learning process of the community meetings and discussions ... is failing in obedience as any other member might do."⁸

Fr. Timothy brings up the relationship between power, authority and responsibility in government. "There can be no competition for power of responsibility either to grab it or flee from it. We must strengthen each other."⁹ The Master's thoughts on "power" are interesting. It is indeed true that we all have power — a power we exercise by what we say and do not say and by what we undertake and refuse to undertake within community. These relationships of power are felt even more intensely in an enclosed life. Our willingness to take up or lay down tasks in the community affects everyone. In the same way what we speak and what we are unwilling to speak to one another affects all of us and the quality of our life together. The use of power is an element of government and can be used for the common good or to further our particular interests. Our government can function well only with the right use of power.¹⁰ An important question we need to ask ourselves is: "How can we best exercise the power each of us possesses?"

How do the structures of shared responsibility help us to be free? First, if lived fully, they give a right perspective to the use of power and responsibility as service to our communion. The subjection of power to service highlights the truth of our communion in God. Likewise, the dynamism of shared responsibility frees us to listen together to God. When all the authorities in our government are working in proper relationship to one another it is easier to attain our common goals. The reciprocal exercise of authority is an efficacious means of freeing us from selfishness and transforming us into a communion of love and an icon of the Trinity. In understanding this we begin to touch the deepest levels of a "spirituality of government" and can fully understand how LCM can say that the nuns "pursue communion through their manner of government" (FC V). Our communion will be abundantly fruitful through the "participation of all in the ordering of the life of the monastery ... it is of great importance" that all should participate (LCM 7). This text of LCM has bearing both on the individual and the communal ordering of our life. In regard to the individual it is related to LCM 4.II. The work of the Chapter is its communal

expression.

In the history of Dominican monastic life there are numerous examples of failures to maintain this balance by our leaders and by the members, individually and communally. There are several ways in which the members of the community can fail to be faithful to this unique balance: by not exercising responsibility in Chapter through entering into the debate, through an individualism which can prevent the community from making decisions for the common good, and by a lack of obedience to the Prioress, to the decisions of the Chapter, or the failure to be obedient to the common tasks of taking up and relinquishing responsibilities in communal living. Failure on the part of monastic leadership usually occurs when a Prioress absolutizes her authority, tends to set up a "dynasty" of like-minded sisters, seeks to promote one particular way of interpreting the life, fails to listen to the sisters, or does not allow the Chapter to function maturely.¹¹ It is always a struggle in our life together to balance all these realities and yet, this is precisely the way to attain freedom and holiness. Such a balance is of the very essence of good Dominican government. When our communities have not functioned well it is almost invariably a matter of an imbalance in the functioning of "authorities." To do it well is guaranteed to give us a participation in the death of Christ, a dying to selfishness and a turning outward in love for the sake of others.

We usually dare to risk the most in new beginnings. In LG, Fr. Timothy gives the example of Blessed Jordan's election as Provincial a year after he entered the Order. We all know examples of this same daring in the beginning of the foundation of our monastery. But somehow after this initial daring we seem to settle into known paths and as the years go by we challenge ourselves less and become less creative in our willingness to appoint new sisters to roles of authority and responsibility within the community. As individuals we can also settle into particular roles and refuse to allow ourselves to be stretched by undertaking new endeavors within the community. Such practices can prevent on-going growth and renewal both in the community as a whole and within individuals. It can also result in a communal existence that is less vibrant and attractive. A loss of creativity and a sense of newness in living can foster a static and lukewarm approach to our existence. When this happens the tendency is to turn inward and our vision becomes smaller. St. Dominic was characterized by breadth of vision and a great-heartedness. These same characteristics give definition to the Order's spirit and are part of the heritage of freedom and holiness that has been given to us. Fear can often prevent us from looking to the future with creativity. We sometimes call this fear prudence. When we perceive these tendencies, individually and as a community, we need to open ourselves to the gifts of the Spirit, especially Wisdom and Counsel.

It is as a community we seek the will of God in the common purpose and goals of our life. This focal point guides the community at all the levels of its "authorities." We are called to "acknowledge and respect the authority" of each member of the community.¹² The structures of our life give us a basic form by which to live out a love for Jesus Christ in freedom. It is the freedom of living a shared life of responsibility. The foundation of this shared responsibility is the confidence and trust we should have in one another. Only in a common endeavor and shared unity in our practice of government can we truly live the tradition in freedom.

Another important element for good government is that of Visitation. Regular Visitations add an essential element to our governmental structure and provide another component of accountability by furnishing a forum for all the members of the community to discuss issues and to look at their life in an objective and healthy way. Both Fr. Damian during his term as Master and now Fr. Timothy have stressed the importance of Visitations for the nuns. In his letter to the nuns, Fr. Damian was emphatic, asking the Prioress and Council to ensure that a monastery have a Visitation at least every 2 years. The primary reason for a Visitation is to aid our

communion. It is meant especially to "help the community to function better in the three departments of authority - Prioress, Chapter, Council."¹³

FREEDOM IN CHAPTER TO SEEK THE COMMON GOOD

The importance of Chapter in the Dominican tradition is firmly rooted in the communal nature of the Order. It is because of this that Chapter is central to our practice of government. We gather in Chapter to pursue communion by encouraging one another to faithfulness and by coming to common decisions that will strengthen the pursuit of the goals of our life. Our discussions are grounded in an end outside of our individuality and are meant to further our unity in mind and heart. Our Chapter sharings and deliberations, our trust and confidence in one another in the exercise of our responsibility, are directly related to our communion in the Spirit.

One of the most important tasks of the Chapter is the mutual assistance we give to one another in the following of Christ through a life of virtue. We do this in Regular Chapter where "the nuns gather as sisters in charity and humility under the leadership of the prioress to give one another mutual assistance in the renewal and development of the regular life" (LCM 68). There are several important points in this text. First, renewal and development are seen as the special task of the whole community. The word 'development' is especially important. It points to the fact that our life is not static but has definite periods in which the community will need to grow and change in certain ways to be faithful to the future and to the spirit of our tradition. Even in the stability of our monastic existence we need continual renewal. Second, the Chapter gathers under the leadership of the Prioress. The first responsibility of the Prioress is to encourage and foster unity of mind and heart within the community as set forth in LCM. Her leadership of the Chapter is not one of dominance but of care for the sisters and our communion (LCM 195).¹⁴

Chapter in the tradition of the Order is also legislative. Our legislative chapters are not mere business meetings. The enactment of legislation also bears directly on our communion. The monastery Chapter is called upon to make decisions in the light of the common good and to change legislation on the local level (directories) and in conjunction with the other Dominican monasteries on the international level (LCM). How to do this smoothly on the international level and what it will mean for us is still being worked out. The International commission is a first step, along with our participation in the General Chapter. Both of these developments are very important and make possible whatever future steps are to be taken. On the national level federations or conferences which can unite individual monasteries in regions are also indispensable to our present situation and the responsibility that we are undertaking in forming our own legislation.

The Chapter of the monastery has the role of **examining and deciding** the most important matters concerning the life of the community (LCM, 201).¹⁵ What does this text mean? It is certainly one of the areas where we need to understand and keep the balance of shared responsibility. In the spirit of Dominican government two extremes must be avoided: on the one hand, that of thinking our common responsibility means that the superior has to bring everything to the Chapter; on the other hand, "the superior should not use this as an excuse to deny the community responsibility for anything that is of importance" to all the sisters.¹⁶ Understanding and putting LCM 201 into practice is also fundamental to our communion.¹⁷ Humbert of Romans in the thirteenth century wrote: "What is of true importance to the life of all should be considered by all." Our discussions, mutual discernment and decisions have as their goal furthering unity and faithfulness to our common life. It is not a matter of seeking the will of the majority and even less is the purpose of our decisions to serve individual or particular group agendas. It is not to seek my will or another sister's will but to discover what is required for the upbuilding of community and the mission of the Order.¹⁸ A community that can both make good decisions rooted in our

common goals and also implement them will be a strong community.

The role of the Prioress in Chapter is not merely a passive one of bringing the community to consensus. It also entails a particular care for fidelity to the Constitutions and regular observance. Dominican obedience requires both open discussion in Chapter and obedience to the Prioress who fosters the unity of observance within the monastery. The Chapter is also responsible for ensuring the implementation of decisions made through our encouragement of one another in Regular Chapter and through individual encouragement and obedience as we live out our life together.¹⁹

Both Fr. Damian in his Letter to the Nuns and Fr. Timothy's Letter on Government stress the importance of the relationship between listening and obedience. Our listening is first of all an attentive communal listening to the Word of God dwelling among us and speaking through the words we speak to one another. The particular way in which we are formed in our tradition is by "allowing the interplay of all the voices that make up our community."²⁰ Three Masters of the Order have written about the importance of seeking consensus in our Chapter discussions. Consensus, a modern word, implies the process by which we seek through dialogue and listening, unity of heart and purpose in community. In regard to the Prioress' leadership and consensus Fr. Damian comments: "Even though the use of one's authority may be legitimate it will only bring results if the Prior/Prioress genuinely seeks to arrive at consensus within the community."²¹ Fr. de Couesnongle associates seeking consensus with communities of faith. He readily acknowledges the demands that seeking unanimity makes on individuals and the whole community. It is faithfulness to these demands that sanctifies and forms us as a communion of persons in the Spirit. Given the principles of unanimity and communion, although the fundamental rule of democracy is majority rule this is not true for our government. "Our law is unanimous rule."²² Attaining unanimity is not always possible. But our "striving for unanimity — even if we do not always succeed in achieving it — is the sure guarantee of the presence of the Lord and his Spirit, and by that very fact, is a more certain way of discovering the will of God."²³ When it is not possible to arrive at unanimity the matter is decided by majority vote. Fr. Timothy mentions that it is the special responsibility of the Prior/Prioress to know when further discussion would not be fruitful and it is time to bring the matter to a vote. Otherwise a community can become paralyzed through indecision. To decide matters by a majority vote is also an "innovation of the Dominican tradition."²⁴

We enter into Chapter debates with a great trust in the ultimate power of truth and a trust in our communal discernment. There should be no fear to discuss issues that affect the whole community and the quality of our life. It is important to discuss together the difficult issues which create tensions. Our listening to one another should be particularly attentive if an issue generates fears and hesitations when discussed. Such attentiveness to one another builds trust within the community and can assist us toward surrendering our individual concerns and fears to embrace our common concerns. Attentive listening is crucial for attaining that unity of mind and heart which will obtain for us deeper insight into our essential purpose and allow the community to remain "Spirit-filled" and spirited. Listening to all the voices in Chapter and cherishing the voices of the weakest among us testifies to our belief that the Holy Spirit is working through each of us in a unique way for the upbuilding of the community.

Fear is an enemy to our communion. Trust was one of St. Dominic's outstanding characteristics and is one of the most important elements of Dominican government. Trust in one another is basic for a true communion. Sometimes we will be disappointed and even have our trust abused but that is no reason to renounce a fundamental mutual confidence. Where there is a great deal of fear in a community the communion is imperfect and in danger. Inevitably fear is translated into some form of control that retards growth and the true freedom that should be

characteristic of our life.²⁵ When the freedom of true communion is missing then we are easily divided through mistrust and misunderstanding. Where we can attain freedom from self-interest and can listen together to the Word, where freedom of thought and debate are present, and when we have the courage to trust communal striving for truth, then God is powerfully among us and we are truly daughters of St. Dominic. Such freedom is possible if we continually surrender to the Holy Spirit who is forming us into a communion of love. Does this seem an impossible ideal? Yet is it not just such a communal existence that is envisioned by the Rule of St. Augustine and St. Dominic's ideal for the Order? A communion that is possible only through the grace of Christ and in the Spirit. A communion, which, as we have said images the self-giving love which is the life of the Trinity. We will fail one another but what is important is our *continual striving to become such a community even in the midst of failures*. The full realization of such communion is eternal life.

I truly believe that it is the ability to ask the questions and to freely debate the issues in the clear light of our goals that has enabled the Order to remain unified through the centuries. This will also be the source of true communal vitality for the nuns. Listening to one another with mutual trust and respect is indispensable: respect among the sisters, between the sisters and the Prioress, and the respect of the Prioress for the dignity of each sister and her contribution to the common good. Our Chapter discussions are meant to be a common search for truth and not a matter of winning a point.²⁶ Searching for the truth together is seeking to know the Word and to be obedient to the Will of the Father.

As members of the Order of Preachers we have a special responsibility for the words we speak. Our life as nuns is characterized by silence but there are times when we must speak the Word of comfort, the Word of truth and the liberating Word to one another. It is a challenge to know when to be silent and when to speak words that will be grace-filled and life-giving. It is our love, trust and acceptance of one another which helps us to dare to speak the truth. Conversely it is our love, trust and acceptance of one another which helps us to hear the word of truth spoken to us by our sisters. There is a fundamental dependence between what we say and do in Chapter and the quality of our communion with one another outside of Chapter. If we love one another and seek together our common good in our daily living: "then we will be able to have those open debates about our common life, about how we fail and can grow, which were the aim of the old Chapter of Faults."²⁷

The healthy functioning of our Chapters is so important because of the essential communal nature of our life. Good government means communal effort, trust and confidence in one another, and co-responsibility for our life together. Everything is at stake when these elements are missing. Fr. Timothy's words to the French Federations are right on target:

The mutual dependence which we accept when we make profession in the Order presumes that we have confidence in each other. If we are no longer able to build the future together with courage and confidence we will readily seek solutions from outside. We resign ourselves to dream of a person who could at least temporarily save the situation of the community. But often the problem is not necessarily the lack of personnel but the community itself which has lost confidence.²⁸

FREEDOM OF THE WORD - A WORD POURED OUT

Timothy Radcliffe has shown himself to be concerned for the universal mission of the whole Order and for the renewal of Dominican life. This is a recurring theme in his letters to the Order and in his messages to the Nuns. In *LG* he writes:

The Master of the Order has to promote the unity of the Order in its common mission. We see this common mission most clearly in the establishment of new foundations, in the renewal of the Order where it is weak, and in the houses directly under the Master's jurisdiction.²⁹

As members of the Order the nuns also have a direct concern for its common mission. LCM 18:1 concludes with the statement that "under the leadership of superiors who represent God in their human ministry, we are **dedicated to working for the growth and common good of the Church and of the Order.**" In a new way we are beginning to realize that dedication to the common mission of the Order entails more than our prayers. It also includes a common commitment to the renewal of Dominican monastic life. The Master of the Order as the universal head and focal point of unity for the Order also has the responsibility to promote Dominican contemplative life in cooperation with the nuns. In this regard he quotes LCM 181, "the nuns, like the Friars, should have an enlightened participation in their own government." Such participation according to this text goes beyond the exercise of government within the monastery to include compiling and modifying our Constitutions. Our legislative responsibility includes an awareness of our vocation as nuns, our share in the mission of the Order and a "solicitude for Dominican contemplative life promoted according to the conditions of each new age" (LCM, 181). He notes that LCM highlights "the responsibility of each Nun of the Order **not only for the good of her own community but for Dominican contemplative life in general.**"³⁰

The questions that Fr. Timothy (and Fr. Damian as Master) have asked us to reflect upon come from the real conditions in which we find ourselves as regards community life, our relationship to the Order, the Church and the world. I believe we stand at a unique moment of renewal and growth, a renewal that could only happen at this juncture of our history. New questions are being generated that focus our attention both on our international dimensions and our participation in the mission of the Order. The challenge is to deepen our understanding of and be accountable for our membership in the Order. We need to explore those questions related to what Fr. Timothy defines as the areas where our common mission is most visible, that is, the establishment of new foundations and the renewal of Dominican monastic life where it is weak. The continuance of Dominican monastic life does depend on us, our listening to the Spirit and moving into the future responsibly.

Personally and as communities [we] must take the essential decisions to guarantee this future and prepare for it courageously rather than **suffer it passively.** More than ever we need to take up this responsibility without fear. If we do not search for solutions together, some communities run a risk of no longer being able to create conditions worthy of Dominican contemplative life.³¹

It has so often been our temptation to wait and let the necessity of change be irrevocably upon us before we begin to make creative decisions for our future. We need to search for solutions together now, nationally and internationally. Such solutions will probably necessitate changes and the creation of new vehicles for unified action and collaboration among the monasteries. Thus it was necessary to create the *International Commission of Nuns*. If new entities are needed in order to promote and sustain our monastic life we have the wisdom of our tradition to guide us. We can take heart in the Master's words: "In our Dominican tradition to establish a new structure does not mean to take away power from those it wants to represent nor to impose something on them. On the contrary it means to give them a voice, foster better representation and enable the established authorities to act for the common good."³²

As Dominican nuns we share the universal mission of the Order and exist internationally. All Dominican monasteries are governed by the same legislation and are part of the unity of the

Order through our profession of obedience to the Master. In the text of LCM 181 there is a specific ordering of structures in which the legislation of the nuns and the government of the autonomous monasteries are situated. The order of the laws by which we are governed is important. There is a progression from the universal to the particular. An individual monastery and its governmental structure exists in the wider context of the common Church legislation proper to all the nuns, and then as part of the Order's legislative structure by obedience to the Master of the Order as the regular superior of all monasteries, and the General Chapter as its legislation applies to the nuns. As members we are accountable to the Order. Our faithfulness to our "way of life" as Dominicans depends on our union, through obedience, to the common mission of the Order. Although the government of the Nuns functions within the autonomy of each monastery, a single monastery does not constitute Dominican monastic life. Our identity as Dominicans is not taken from belonging to a particular monastic community but from our membership in the Order of Preachers and in the existence of our life as it is constituted throughout the world. Belonging to a particular monastic community is the way in which we live out that identity. Therefore, the autonomous government of our monasteries is not the defining principle of Dominican monastic existence but rather our membership in the Order as nuns bound by a common legislation. In this sense the autonomy of an individual monastery cannot be considered as absolute. Fr. Damian writes in a similar vein: "Just as the authority of a Prioress is not absolute in our tradition, so, too, I believe we are called today by the Church and by the Order to realize that the autonomy of monasteries cannot be absolute in the sense that they must be aware of trends elsewhere, and help and be helped, by other monasteries."³³

What is being discussed is not the negation of the autonomy of our monasteries. The autonomous government of the individual monasteries remains a viable and important part of the nuns' government but autonomy cannot mean isolation from other Dominican monasteries with whom we are bound by a common legislation. Nor can our autonomy free us from the responsibility we have toward the common mission of the Order by virtue of our obedience to the Master of the Order. Rather something positive is being added: the relationship of autonomous monasteries to the Order and to other Dominican monasteries. Such thinking constitutes a new understanding of the functioning of autonomous monasteries. We are faced now with a commitment to work toward the flourishing of Dominican monastic life throughout the Order. Our future is a task involving all monasteries and all Nuns. In facing the future, initiating dialogue, sharing reflections and making decisions the main question is, "What will enable Dominican Monastic life to flourish and fulfill its purpose in all integrity?"

Understanding the governmental autonomy of our monasteries in relationship to other Dominican monasteries has raised some serious difficulties. In their work of collaboration the French Federations have observed: "that the most acute and universal problems . . . have already met with the inability for many years to take decisions due mainly to the 'autonomy' of monasteries." Do we not have to question clinging to a rigid interpretation of autonomy if it is no longer serving the goals of our life or the well-being of Dominican contemplative life in its totality? This is a question we need to take very seriously. The autonomy of our monasteries needs to be combined with solidarity in our common vocation or else we may be using autonomy as an excuse for isolationism and selfishness. There is a real necessity for our understanding of the autonomy of the monasteries to evolve in order to be faithful to our common purpose. The Master writes that 'appropriate autonomy' in the *Fundamental Constitution of the Order* is "clearly linked to the proportional participation of all entities with the universal power of the Master of the Order and therefore with co-responsibility and solidarity because the future of the Order and the life of your monasteries depend as much, if not more, on lived solidarity shared with other communities."³⁴

Federations/Conferences: A heightened awareness of having channels of communication has made the establishment of Federations or Conferences on the national level even more urgent and indispensable. Federations are being so strongly encouraged because of the importance of collaboration and unified action at this particular time of our history. In the European countries and many third world countries, existing Federations have definitely moved toward collaboration for the strengthening of Dominican Monastic life in their respective countries.³⁵ They have come to an acute awareness of the need for new solutions because of the circumstances in which they find themselves. I think we have similar needs in our own country but we have not yet had to face them in the same way.

Our legislation sees Federations in a positive light. LCM 235:I reads: "Monasteries of nuns are not only autonomous, but also juridically distinct and independent of one another." The text continues: "However, in order that the bonds of communion uniting them in mutual assistance can be more effective, several monasteries may be associated in one federation." In this text of LCM we have a recognition of both the autonomy and juridical distinction of each monastery along with, not in opposition to, the idea of the communion that unites us in the larger actuality of our Dominican monastic vocation. In the *Fundamental Constitution of the Order* we read that in the communion and universal mission of the Order:

what predominated is an organic and balanced collaboration between all the parts for the purposes of the Order. The Order is not limited to conventual fraternity although this is its base cell; it spreads into communions between the convents which constitute our provinces (VII).

Fr. Timothy quotes this text in his letter to the two French Federations and then asks if our Federations of Nuns could not be understood in the same way? In a recent article in the May issue of IDI this Idea is again explained very clearly:

the Order is conceived as a large world-wide federation that, while united and respectful towards central authority (all friars indeed pronounce a vow of obedience to the Master of the Order), maintains a beneficial autonomy: the Provinces into which the Order is divided are autonomous and are not simply means of governing, of controlling or for administration. They are not merely decentralized subdivisions, or 'communication branches' from top to bottom, but rather they enjoy self-government and their own legislative power.³⁶

In our Dominican tradition of government we have a model for how we can understand the autonomy, a beneficial and real governmental autonomy at the level of our individual monasteries, along with structures that will unite us in responsible action on the level of our universal existence as Dominican Nuns. The situation of our monasteries world-wide, along with our participation in modifying and changing our legislation makes it necessary to give serious consideration to this model.

In our own country we are not comfortable with the idea of Federation because of bad experiences in the past. We have opted instead to be loosely united through the Conference. But already questions have arisen from individual monasteries that call for the more structured and unified action that Federation provides. I do not think we can ignore this fact. Past mistakes are not meant to paralyze us toward certain structures but rather provide a greater wisdom in utilizing them. Even if we do not want a Federation perhaps it is the time to look to the Conference as a vehicle for strengthening and renewing Dominican contemplative life in the United States. Such a suggestion calls for discussion and discernment among our communities.

Foundations: The Foundation of monasteries gives new life and vigor to Dominican contemplative life and to the Order, life that is not optional or peripheral. There is need for order and recognized priorities in the establishment of new monasteries. According to LCM 229:2 it is the Master who gives permission for foundations. As we have seen the common mission and unity of the Order is the special concern and responsibility of the Master of the Order. He is in a unique position for knowing where the Order needs to be renewed and established, so that the Word may be preached and witnessed to, for the salvation of all. He is asking us to cooperate with him in this area of renewal.

Collaborative efforts in establishing new foundations seem particularly important today. Many of our monasteries world-wide are diminishing in numbers and individual monasteries are finding it increasingly difficult to establish a foundation. I think most of us would admit that it would be a serious burden for a single monastery in the United States to be responsible for a foundation. There has been a movement for Federations or several monasteries to cooperate in foundations. The Master of the Order has also initiated such collaboration. The Canada foundation is such an endeavor. Undertaking a foundation in this way is new to us and has raised uneasiness and concern because of the need for sisters in our established monasteries. But what other possibilities are there to enable Dominican monastic life to be extended and flourish? A truly collaborative venture in this direction would I believe make the burden of a foundation much less than any of us imagine. If we would be willing to begin to think positively of ways we might carry off this project together I think we would be surprised at our hidden resources. It is not enough simply to maintain existing monasteries. There also has to be a generous and creative impulse towards establishing new life. As regards the shared financial support of such an endeavor I would ask how much does each of our monasteries give to charities each year? Is not the good of the Order and Dominican monastic life a worthy contribution for our funds and efforts? As Fr. Timothy so clearly said: **"the future of the Order and the life of your monasteries depend as much, if not more, on lived solidarity shared with other communities."**³⁷ Some believe such efforts are doomed to failure because of the difficulty, if not impossibility for sisters coming from many communities to establish a foundation. I do not believe this is true. Crucial for the success of a foundation is the willingness to become a communion of sisters – a new community. I use the word communion because it reflects the deeper reality of what a Dominican community is meant to be. In a very real sense in our own community each time we add a new member to the Chapter we become a new community. If we have accepted that challenge and continued to grow, change and be renewed, then, we should be able to take up the challenge of coming together with our sisters in a different location. Dedication to such projects as the Canada foundation calls for "the utter gracious generosity of the Word."³⁸ Are we not called to such generosity even at the price of sacrifice? It seems to me we are as members of the Order and responsible for its mission.

Another international concern is the necessity of closing monasteries. Both Fr. Damian Byrne and the present Master of the Order have written of certain criteria to be used in judging whether a particular monastery should close.³⁹ These points take up the needs of the monastery itself and go beyond it to include the common good of Dominican monastic life in its local and universal actuality. Is this particular monastery the only Dominican monastic presence in a locale? What are the possibilities of vocations? Can the community provide adequate formation of candidates? Is a monastery still able to renew its government from within? Does a community still offer a healthy and growing experience of Dominican contemplative life? Some of our smaller monasteries are already trying to look at these questions honestly. Perhaps our monasteries with larger numbers also need to reflect upon these questions in relation to their future and the vitality of their Dominican presence. It seems to me extremely important to look at these issues not only from the view point of dying and closure but from the aspect of how we may continue to generate life. For example in some countries there is a proliferation of existing monasteries, many are not getting vocations, the members are aging and the monastery itself, within the next 20 years or

sooner, may be closed. In other countries Dominican monastic life is non-existent. The Master has specifically asked for a foundation in Nigeria and in other areas of the world. Why can we not begin thinking of where Dominican monastic life needs to exist or be strengthened and move toward amalgamating monasteries and sending forth sisters to begin new foundations? In this way our diminishment creates new life and out of our weakness we can cooperate in renewing and strengthening our contemplative monastic presence in the Order, the Church and the world. Our giving would be like the widow's mite in the Gospel: out of her poverty she gave all she had. Fr. Timothy writes: "Being aware of one's own limitations is not the end but can be an occasion for a new departure in solidarity with other communities. A path then opens allowing us to find durable solutions together to the problems which we face and a joint effort in solidarity."⁴⁰

Our hope lies in the revitalization of Dominican monastic life throughout the Order and the ways in which we can contribute individually and communally. In the past there has been a general acceptance of the idea that once a monastery is established it is meant to last forever. This is a concept we are rethinking today. All of living is a process of birth and death. We are born, we seek to live a good life and complete the task given to us in the divine plan and then our work finished, we die. Analogically such a process can be applied to the life of our monastic communities. Each new foundation is begun in order to ensure the continuance and fruitfulness of Dominican monastic life. A community as it matures thinks of giving new life by founding other monasteries. Thus a monastery can begin, serve the goals of Dominican monastic life and the Order in a certain area and then give way to new life. Taking this broader vision of Dominican life allows us to put things in right perspective. For example, it is easier to understand that closing one monastery is not simply a negation of life but may in the long run be a positive step toward creating, strengthening and extending our Dominican monastic presence. When we begin to discuss topics such as this we tend to think of it as something that is going to happen to us. I believe, however, we need to begin to discuss such topics as a process we ourselves are undertaking in the light of our common goals and purposes.

Strengthening what is weak: How can we strengthen Dominican monastic life and in what areas is collaborative sharing most urgent? In thinking about strengthening what is weak the main concern is the quality of our life in community. Our concern needs to move beyond simply ensuring the survival of our monastery. Rather, the Order, through the Master, is asking us to bring about new growth and vitality to Dominican contemplative life within the Order. We cannot limit ourselves to doing things because this is the way we have always done them. Our attitude toward the future must be one that generates hope. "To do this we must inevitably accept to go beyond a perspective of conserving the past."⁴¹ The future is always built upon the tradition. Yet faithfulness to the tradition is something far more than simply conserving the past. Tradition is not a dead letter but a living relationship to the Holy Spirit who leads us faithfully. Damian Byrne writes: "What is important is that Dominican contemplative life flourish in as many places — new and old — as possible and not that it continues in every place if this means a diminished kind of existence for some and, especially, for young sisters."⁴²

Another consideration taken up both by Fr. Timothy and Fr. Damian is houses of common formation. Fr. Timothy asked the French Federations: "Can the future of Dominican contemplative life in France really be guaranteed if all the monasteries of the Order continue to admit their own vocations?"⁴³ Federations in other countries have already responded to this reality and have benefited. As Fr. Damian pointed out in his letter to the Nuns the good of the candidate should be a primary consideration in making such a decision. Having a common novitiate is a definite way of providing new life for many of our communities. What an individual monastery cannot do alone may become a real possibility in relationship with other monasteries. The theological Formation Program does provide a common base of study but is this enough? We share a common tradition that is greater than the individual spirit of any one of our houses.

For many of us this consideration is a threatening one and in our country has found little acceptance. My question is have we given it serious consideration within a common dialogue, searching for the truth and attentive to the pros and cons both in regard to our monasteries and in regard to the candidate? Such reflection and questioning is essentially Dominican.

We are being encouraged to find solutions to our difficulties through common endeavors. What is impossible for an isolated community may become feasible through shared projects. Our dialogue with one another, nationally and internationally can help by giving us a wider context in which to analyze our present situation. Fr. de Couesnongle frequently spoke of "confidence for the future." Fr. Timothy often uses the word "courage" and its derivatives in speaking to us of our future commitments. He writes of the courage to make decisions, to dare to take new initiatives, the courage to create something alive and vibrant. We will find the courage and the wisdom we need in confidence in the power of the Holy Spirit present to us at this particular time of our history.

CONCLUSION

I share this reflection from a belief in the deepest values of our life: seeking God, being united to Jesus and him crucified and risen, the liturgical life, study, prayer, and seeking communion through our manner of government. It is with a hope for the future that I write, a future that we need to plan responsibly and not "suffer passively" so that we are able to pass this wonderful tradition on to others as something vital and dynamic. How do we do this? It is from the wisdom of having lived the tradition that we will be able to shape the future. Whatever is done in any of these areas needs to be done with care, honoring the specific purpose and goals of our life as Dominican contemplative nuns. Collaboration calls for generosity, openness and an outward turning in a spiritually healthy way. I would suggest that freedom from a spirit of isolationism, concern for the well-being of Dominican monastic life throughout the Order, the willingness to participate in that well-being through the sharing of personnel and cooperating in new foundations, is not a threat to our autonomy nor is it opposed to our structure of life. The ultimate test of our seeking is always the same, the common good of Dominican monastic life and faithfulness to our purpose and mission within the Order. We need to strengthen our belief in one another, within our community and within the broader context of all our united communities in the Conference. We can then progress to the trust and confidence necessary for a common dialogue, discernment, and shared insights as a universal entity.

New endeavors always present risks and seem to complicate life unnecessarily. It is always so much easier to continue as we are without changing anything. But can we do that? Must we not respond to our present situation in ways that will ensure new life and continued growth? If by our common efforts we are able to ensure the flourishing of Dominican monastic life then we will have served our goals and have been faithful to our call, as individuals and communities. The garden of St. Dominic is broad, joyous and spacious and from within the wisdom of our tradition we will be renewed and have hope for the future. ✠

NOTES

1. Fr Timothy Radcliffe, O.P., "Dominican Freedom and Responsibility: Towards a Spirituality of Government," (referred to in the paper as LG), IDI #353, July-August, 1997, p. 13.
2. *The Dialogue of Catherine of Siena*, Trans. Suzanne Noffke, O.P. (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), p. 339.

3. LG, p. 141.
4. Malachy O'Dwyer, "Pursuing Communion in Government: Role of the Chapter," *Dominican Monastic Search*, Vol. II Fall/Winter, 1992.
5. Damian Byrne's *Letter to the Nuns*, (referred to in the paper as: *LN*), p. 8-9. Some representative texts from LCM that point to shared responsibility are: #201 and 203; also related to 201 are #V of the Fundamental Constitution of the Nuns: "pursuing communion through their manner of government" and #7 on the participation of all in the ordering of the life; 20:I recognizes the Prioress' obligation to listen to the sisters and her own competence to ask obedience; 20:II gives recognition to the fact that we are gifted individually for the common good and that this should be recognized. #4:I speaks of our mutual acceptance of the giftedness within community to be used for the common good, and individual responsibility for the common tasks. #195 speaks of the Prioress' special commission to foster unity and charity, the contemplative life and care for regular observance.
6. *LN*, p. 6.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
8. *New Blackfriars*, June 1984, p. 284, 285.
9. LG, p. 149.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 141-142.
11. Cf. *LN*, p. 9.
12. LG, p. 142.
13. *LN*, p. 11.
14. *LN*, p. 8.
15. In LCO there is a provision for members of the community to suggest matters to be discussed in the chapter. Fr. Damian cites "the right to have matters discussed" as one of the wise provisions of LCO. This would be a very important legislative change we could suggest for our own Constitutions. Cf. *LN*, p. 7.
16. LG, p. 145.
17. Cf. *LN*, p. 6.
18. LG, p. 145.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
20. LG, p. 139, 145. Fr. Damian writes similarly: "In the Dominican tradition you have to listen in your monasteries to the Prioress, the Council and the chapter . . . this will require real, open discussion in Chapter; acceptance by the Council of its role in juridical matters and of the Prioress in ensuring the observance of the Constitutions and the implementation of the general consensus of the community in matters open to it." *LN*, p. 6.
21. *LN*, p. 7.
22. Quoted in *LN*, p. 7.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
24. LG, p. 147. It is helpful to study what Fr. Timothy says about majority rule in his letter on government.
25. "Fear is servile, and therefore is incompatible with our status as children of God and brothers and sisters of each other. It is above all wrong in a superior, who is called to help [her sisters] grow in confidence and fearlessness." LG, p. 143-4.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
28. Timothy Radcliffe, O.P., "Letter to the Monasteries of the Two French Federations," Rome, 1/16/95 (referred to in the paper as: *FF*), p. 5.
29. LG, p. 157.
30. *FF*, pp. 1 & 2.
31. *FF*, p. 4.
32. Timothy Radcliffe, O.P., "To All the Monasteries of the Order," Rome, May 1994. The letter is on the Commission of Nuns.
33. *LN*, p. 4.
34. *FF*, p. 3.
35. Since the time of Pius XII the Church has encouraged monasteries to unite together in some manner that safeguards their autonomy of government but avoids isolationism. Pius XII saw the purpose of such unions as an aid to communion among the members and as a positive help to promote regular

observance and the contemplative life (*Sponsa Christi*, Art. VI, n. 2-1). "Institutes and independent monasteries should, as opportunity offers and with the approval of the Holy See, form federations, if they belong in some measure to the same religious family. Failing this, they should form unions . . ." Quoted in *LN*, p. 18. Fr. Damian suggests several areas where Federations could be helpful. *Perfectae Caritatis*, (No.22) likewise strongly recommends Federations.

36. Pietro Lippini, O.P., "Special Feature: the Next General Chapter in Bologna," *IDI*, May 1998, p. 128. A close reading of this article would be very beneficial.
37. *FF*, p. 3.
38. *LG*, p. 158.
39. *LN*, p. 20, included here are the norms given in *Perfectae Caritatis*. The document suggests amalgamation with another institute [or monastery] if suppression is necessary. Fr. Damian in listing his criteria points out: "if the main effort is on keeping a house going then the question of closing or not is merely being postponed."
40. *FF*, p. 5.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
42. *LN*, p. 21.
43. *FF*, p. 7.

SUMMONS

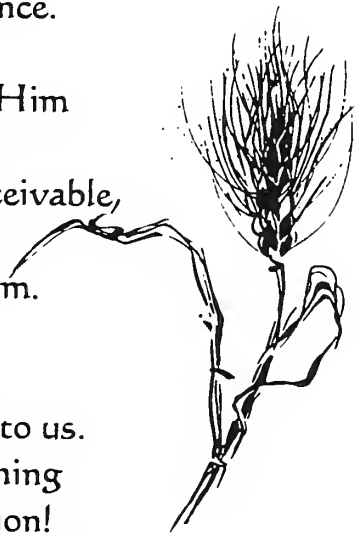
Where is the challenge?

The fleetingness of His Word
The poignancy
Of His Ordinance.

We seek to find Him
Universally.
We know He is perceivable,
In all things
Mirrored to Him.

Lord God,
You are paradigm to us.
You are the dawning
and the completion!

Sister Mary Augustine, O.P.
Los Angeles



LISTEN TO THE SPIRIT

Sister Mary Joseph, O.P.
Marbury, AL

If anyone had told me that I would be attempting to write about the Holy Spirit, I would have thought that person was joking. Besides, in the *Imitation of Christ* we are cautioned not to "dabble" in things too high above us. *"Take heed, therefore, of treating curiously of those things which exceed your knowledge."* However, the things I am putting down are not too high above anyone. They are simple reflections on my quest for the Holy Spirit.

The search began with a realization of what the Holy Spirit could do in our lives if we would just listen to him. The words from Pope John Paul II's Apostolic Letter, *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, gave me a push forward during this year of preparation for the Jubilee. "The primary tasks of the preparation for the Jubilee thus include a renewed appreciation of the presence and activity of the Spirit."¹

I wanted to know all I could about the Holy Spirit — where was he — what was he doing? I had only to open my eyes, my ears, my heart. He is everywhere! Above all he can be found in the Scriptures. I was jubilant! Most amazingly, he dwells in me with the Father and the Son.

The more I sought, the more I found. *"Ask and you shall receive; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you"* (Matt. 7:7). The sun was rising in my little world, casting light in the dark corners of my understanding. Books that were "dry" and seemingly "dull" began to have meaning. The Lord was breathing his Spirit into the dry bones of my spirit. The message was coming through. It was like cleaning my spiritual eyeglasses. Our Constitutions so Spirit-filled, the map that points the way, Dominic's way, became a light for my guidance.

Pope Leo XIII dedicated this Century to the Holy Spirit.² The Holy Spirit has been working powerfully in it, giving us holy successors of Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, countless saints and martyrs. In contemplating the Second Vatican Council, Pope John XXIII prayed for a new Pentecost in the Church. We have only to read the documents to catch the Holy Spirit in action. It is fitting that in the closing years of this Twentieth Century, a year of preparation for the Great Jubilee be focused on the Holy Spirit as the Holy Father has directed. Pope John Paul II has chosen 1998 for this purpose.

Who is this Person of the Holy Spirit for the Dominican Nun? The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, *"To believe in the Holy Spirit is to profess that the Holy Spirit is one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, consubstantial with the Father and the Son. 'With the Father and the Son he is worshipped and glorified.'"*³

The Holy Spirit is the very source of our apostolic, contemplative lives. The vocation of a contemplative nun is a special one which "holds a very honored place in the mission of the Church."⁴ Our Fundamental Constitution declares that the nun is "Called by God, like Mary, to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to his words" (III). "Like the Church of the Apostles, our communion is founded, built up and made firm in the one Spirit" (LCM 3:I).

Through Baptism we become God's children and temples of the Holy Spirit. Where the Spirit is, there also dwell the Father and the Son. We come to realize that we are temples of the Holy Trinity. Confirmation renews the mission of the Spirit in a way that equips us for the battles and struggles of mature adult life in Christ.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, the Consoler, our Teacher. "When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will teach you all the Truth" (John 16:13). It is through him that we come to know Christ. He leads us to contemplate Christ... to strive to be like him... to put on the mind of Christ... to think his thoughts... do his deeds. In time the Spirit reveals what it means that to see Christ is to see the Father. We are drawn imperceptibly into the inner life of the Blessed Trinity.

The Holy Spirit speaks to us in the scriptures. We ponder his words in order to be transformed into Christ by what we look upon, for he became like us in all things save sin. By the action of the Holy Spirit our attitudes develop into those of Christ. *"Though he was in the form of God, he did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at. Rather he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of man"* (Phil. 1:6,7). We are drawn to love what he loves. In the course of our searching the Scriptures, the words become sweet as honey, as the prophet Ezekiel found when he ate the little scroll. The Word will make our lives fruitful in some "mysterious way," known only to the Spirit. Then our lives will proclaim the Word to the world.

As the Spirit dwells in us, so does he dwell in each of our Sisters. We want to be sensitive to his presence there, to "reflect the glory of the Lord and be transformed into his image" (2 Cor. 3:18). It is through the Spirit that we come to know him and to love what he loves. It is through the Spirit that we come to realize more deeply that he loves our Sisters and dwells in them. From this love communicated to us through the Spirit, we are enabled to live together in harmony, one in mind and heart. This living in community makes us cherish one another, mindful of each one as a spouse of Christ and temple of the Holy Spirit, a person to be treated with respect and deference. Our Holy Father Saint Dominic encourages us "never to judge anyone inwardly, but if they see another doing what appears to be wrong, they should assume it to be good, or done with a good intention, for human judgment is often mistaken" (LCM 5). It is the Spirit that enables us to do this.

Our constant striving for fraternal charity with the Spirit as our binding force, makes us powerful in the Spirit. "By this power of the Spirit, we can bear much fruit. He

who has grafted us into the true vine will make us bear the fruit of the Spirit...love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self control."⁵

"Veni Sancte Spiritus!" So we pray with Mary, the sanctuary of the Holy Spirit, a most precious dwelling place of Christ among us. We ask that she may help us to be living temples of the Spirit and tireless witnesses of the Gospel.

Again, I returned to the Letter of the Holy Father, "The primary tasks of the preparation for the jubilee ... include a renewed appreciation of the presence and activity of the Spirit..."⁶ The Holy Father repeats this phrase, *renewed appreciation*, again and again. What an awesome theme! Is this not our constant effort? As I pondered his words, and the ways we might implement them in our community life, these words flashed upon my mind:

Listen to the Spirit!

Four words — Listen to the Spirit. I realized they could be dynamite — explosive. They could be fire.

Can you imagine what might happen when everyone in the Monastery listens more earnestly to the Spirit? When we listen to the Spirit, we can be set on fire. Not merely scorched, not just burned, but made into torches to start a conflagration. As we live and work together, each contact with others can become like a taper touching a candle and setting it ablaze with warmth and light.

How do we listen? Pope John Paul says it should be with "silence and attentiveness" after the example of Our Lady.⁷ Our Lady listened to the words of the Angel Gabriel. She pondered them, then said Her "Fiat". The Spirit overshadowed Her. She conceived and brought forth Jesus, the Son of God, our Savior. In imitation of Our Lady, can we listen more attentively and ponder more intensely the words the Holy Spirit will speak to us?

The prophet, Elijah, went up Mount Sinai to wait for the Lord. There was fire, wind, thunder, an earthquake. The Lord was not in any of these. Then a small whisper of a sound came. Elijah covered his face and listened to the Lord. Can we cover our minds and hearts with the mantle of quietness in order to hear what the Spirit has to say and so live in the reality of His love?

Do we seek God's Spirit in attentive silence, alert to every prompting, to every nudge? When the bell rings, can we be more alert? Perhaps we will hear anew His "Leave everything. Go now." Can we hear His whispered "No" to the unkind remark forming in our mind? "No" to an impatient action?

The Holy Spirit led Jesus into the desert for forty days and forty nights of prayer and fasting. The Spirit might desire to lead us into an awareness of our need for

mortification. Will we follow the Spirit into this desert of self-denial? Will we refrain, restrain, refuse our bodies, minds and hearts acts of self-indulgence?

Could we be more aware that the Holy Spirit dwelling in us wants to listen with our ears to what our Sister is saying? Do we believe he delights in hearing about our studies, what we have read, our jokes? Would we not disappoint him with half-hearted attention and a glazed-over look?

Years ago there was a song called, "I don't want to set the world on fire . . . I just want to start a flame in your heart." With a slight deletion, I can adopt this as my motto: "I do want to set the world on fire" – the fire of the Holy Spirit. As I listen to the Spirit, I can become holier. If these thoughts appeal to others and resonate in their lives, will not sparks of love fly from our Spirit-filled persons in some mysterious way, and perhaps ignite countless conflagrations! Might they not unite to inflame the whole world?

The year 1998 could begin an era of ever spreading, ever deepening, consuming love. Our "attentive silence" has the potential to draw us closer and closer to the very embodiment of love – the Holy Spirit dwelling within each of us. Shall I not, then, listen more attentively? Might I not see the fulfillment of our Holy Father's hopes if I do? ▶◀

NOTES

1. *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, #45.
2. Robert J. Fox, "The Holy Spirit in our Lives," *Soul*, July-August 1998, pg. 10.
3. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #685.
4. Damien Byrne, Letter to the Nuns, May, 1992.
5. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, #736.
6. *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*, #45, 46.
7. *Ibid.*, #48.

PRAYING BEFORE A PICTURE

Sr. Mary of the Savior, O.P.
Farmington Hills, MI

After Six Days....

I watch the elderly nun sitting in her wheelchair near me in chapel. In her hands are two or three picture-cards. Always. Her consciousness and her speech are scattered and sometimes noisy. But she is quiet now, gazing, gazing.

Is she praying?

day one:

Am I praying?

I am looking at the photo of a painting, a recent work of an artist I know — one of the 'fifties group called "les plasticiens" in Québec art history, but now searching on canvas for something else.

I have wished to pray to you today, Lord, looking at this picture. Not at an image of the Face of your Son. Not at that kind of icon; not yet. In your presence I want to ponder your **creating**. In the midst of a happy life, a hunger identified itself: "Life is passing without my pondering Your name: Creator."

I am searching the painting, looking for meaning. My aesthetic theory is dim. I tell myself to look first for color and for shape and for their interaction, not for "meaning." Not yet for meaning.

My theology of creation is dim, too. I tell myself to look for color and for shape and for their interaction, not first for "meaning."

The Exhibition Catalogue in my hands¹ is a marvel for any of "the enclosed": the ill, the poor, the disabled, the nun, the prisoner, the mother of very young children — all of us "shut-ins." The Catalogue is my museum, my art gallery. With it, I suddenly have forty canvases in my hands. It is a breviary.

With the help of the catalogue I am again in the presence of Louis Belzile's work. A painting of his was my first art purchase — a daring and ambiguous commitment. Probably the only such relation to an object in my life. (Because families do such a good job of sharing, it can happen that all one's "furniture" is inherited.) A rare taste,



this particular relationship to an object that is "non-necessary," that is adornment, that is just its own beauty. The purchase? Free, discriminating, and committing. A moment of conversion. You know it, O Lord.

The artist's canvas I purchased to be "mine" has left more than one after-image. Because of my special relationship to it, when You said in my hearing "Sell what you have and give to the poor," that canvas was what I "had." So with unique care – everything else could be distributed – this had to be sold. It was an Isaac. The ambiguity of the first commitment was revealed. Another conversion. You know it, O Lord.

It was a recognition of creature-things and of their beauty and their..... tearfulness; their poignancy. Was it also a recognition of You, Creator?

The attention that I want to pay to each item of Your creation is also a commitment, is it not? Commitment to the flower I stop to admire? To the simple meal I try to take with slow appreciation? To the music I play, listening to the sounds and the flow, and not to my dexterity? To the insights so delicately presented in a story, or in a treatise? To the words of a psalm my community is praying? To the face, oh! the beautiful human face, before me? To wounded people and broken social systems and polluted water?

Repeated moments of recognition of created things, and of their poignant, flawed, or merely limited beauty: is that part of daily contemplative living? A daring commitment also? full of ambiguity? You know it, O Lord.

I want to ponder Creating because I want to attend to You. So I look at the canvas which has drawn me. I take time, I breathe, I am attentive, I participate, I follow wherever doing all that leads....

So also at prayer to You, I take time, I breathe, I am attentive, I participate, I follow wherever all that leads me.... The canvas is a good school.

To pray before a painting can teach me to pray before any and every thing. All the while knowing that each is an Isaac, child of the promise. Everything but You.

Am I praying? The Spirit is praying.

Light "unfurls," la lumière émane, from the center of the canvas, says the commentator.

Have I understood something about Your Creating?

"Creator of the stars of night, Your people's everlasting light," sings an ancient Advent song to You.

day two:

Gazing at a painting is different from gazing at a tree — more like looking at a garden, or at an island-city seen on approach but from miles away. Perhaps the difference is awareness of **mediation**. That mystery too I long to explore in Your sight.

During these days, I do not rest with the canvas that is most like the one I bought years ago. Another attracts me to prayer today — from quite a different period of the artist's own search. Exploring, he has found how to evoke light.

It is according to my faith, Lord, to think that all that is, is "relevant" to You and to my search for You. It is a "given" for me, so firm that I thank you for it, giver of that gift too. I see that relevance is for mediation, and that it asks my willingness.

I select one canvas from among the photos. I am inexpert. I might "do better" praying in the presence of the *Summa*, or of a Quartet, or Gutierrez's *Job*, or Loneragan's *Insight*. Still, we all pray in at least six languages. Why not in one more?

I choose a canvas to nourish my prayer for these few days, to support me as I lean toward Your mysteries: creation, mediation, Incarnation, transcendence, Presence.

The canvas chooses. It draws me in. I come respectfully to it, as a kindergartner to be taught and guided.

The light unfurls from a center.

I ponder what light does. The painting attracts me because light is warmed in it as it passes through structural forms — and forms are lighted up. Is that what mediation is? Mediated and mediator interpenetrate?

Praying before a picture.

Mediation: that is what the artist's painting is — and it teaches me to recognize mediation everywhere.

Praying by means of a picture.

I understand the eucharistic pattern better by recognizing mediation. The host, the chalice, You, come straight at me from the eyes and hands of another person. Amen, I say: Yes, it's so. Amen, I say, to all of it. Through him, with him, in him....

"the Word through whom You made the universe."

All my coming to You is through. Because You are Mystery. These — mystery and mediation — are elements on my canvas, the lines and space and paint I try to bring into harmony. I watch and I watch to see how the artist has done it, what way to integration he has found. His elements vibrate. Light irradiates the structures. "Order and freedom" is the catalogue's name for this artist's journey. Order and freedom.

Am I praying?

Mediation is Your empowering. On my side of the mediation: the weakness where power finds its perfect scope.

I breathe that realization in. I breathe it out in praise.

Am I understanding Creation?

the whole is unmediated!

within the whole, all is mediated!

after the Six Days, all is — not creation — but transformation.
The painting comes right at me from the eyes and hands of the artist,

mediating

light.

Order and freedom.

day three:

Mystery? All my life that has meant: what invites me, not what stops me; what allures me, not what turns me away. You know it, O Lord.

What "matches" mystery is the question in my eyes as I look and look at this canvas, at this event, at this life, at this..... Question, not exclamation; question, not yet answer..... the artist's own question while, loving intelligence, he moved beyond geometry toward light.

Mystery and adoration. Adoration is: following, following. Light must be followed to the center.

When tasted by adoration, the center is nada. It is beyond forms, names, old gods, magic.

But how will flesh and blood keep up? Spirit is held open to mystery by questions and by willingness. What holds sensibility open, Lord? Beauty, a painting, ceremony, theatre, the sounds and movements we make. This painting.

What I think about in this canvas, and what I look for in it, is light. Your creating light. I find it. But what stays with me when I look away — the fruit of my lectio divina, as monastics might say — is the warmth of the colors, the light warmed as it passes among them, the hard shapes softened, the darknesses lightened and set in motion by the richness of the tones. All of that advertence — and my attention to light — composes a readiness?

How become accustomed, adapted, fitted, for transcendence? You know, Lord.

All my gods have been mysterious. Each one has been beyond my ken, at least for a while. I have followed them one after the other. Are they dead gods now, Lord? It feels so when more abundant life comes, or when the total Source manifests itself.

But we should be reverent towards our past, respectful archaeologists of the strata of our own consciousness.

You are a jealous God?

"Great and glorious are You, O Lord, transcending all other gods," the Psalmist sang (135). You are Creator; they are Isaacs. But they live on, as Isaac did in the old story. Like Abraham, I have often misunderstood, and thought he was meant to die.

It is the artist who knows his own work. He knows what is in it. He entitled this canvas, not "mystery" but "magic" (Magie).

day four:

Incarnation: the ultimate reality-check. You! adopting my extroverted way of understanding! As though now for you, as for Augustine during so long a time, what is most convincingly "real" is "body"!

Light unfurls from a center; it warms and lights up forms and structures.

All the Godhead is here.

How make the transition from shapes and lines and color and their interaction, to meaning?

from shapes, color, light, warmth, to: icon?

from light to word? from Light to Word?

from light to face? from Light to Face?

Come, Lord Jesus.

Light from Light.

The mediation here is Mary. "From my birth you have entrusted me to my mother's arms," says the faithful Servant in Psalm 22.

It is hardly a step more to: what you do to the least of my brethren, you do to me.

Mediation.

Gazing can become participation. My eyes are my history, Lord. I find myself decked out in my history as I pray to you, gazing, gazing.

Some of your dear ones have responded differently to depictions of the incarnate person of Your son. Dominic, for example, and countless others, prayed before a crucifix, gazing, gazing. But Thérèse of Lisieux had to lower her eyes and her veil when passing a crucifix; she could not bear to see. (And countless others?)

If prayer before a painting gradually brings to consciousness, as Light, Your Face, and finally the face of Your son, perhaps our eyes, not able to bear it, may.....close.

Are we praying? You know, O Lord.

day five:

When I was little, I was taught at home to pray; I was taught prayers and love, O Lord.

When I was older, I was taught by Sisters at school that it is possible and well-mannered to pray with variety and a little structure, e.g.: Adoration, Contrition, Thanksgiving, Supplication.²

Older yet, I often prayed with these helps — in slow succession, as with rosary beads — letting one attitude and then another shape my prayer, staying with one in

Your sight as long as it was vivid, then passing to another, as one does with the words of a book, or of a psalm, or of the Our Father.

Sometimes you lead us beyond "prayer of adoration" to **being** adoration — or sorrow or petition or thanksgiving. Sometimes a person praying is held in one attitude for a time, even for the day.

Holding us, there is a **Presence**.

Or there is an absence — is that more accurately said?³

Not a few write about the experience of nada — so breath-close to atheism in its darkness and "beyond-ness," yet so vivifying an experience. Contemplative living often prefers, is at home with, gravitates toward, the dark brightness, the non-figurative canvas, the silent word. How this preference, taught by experience, fits with insights about mediation and incarnation is a matter for prayer before You, O Creator of the stars of night.

It is said nowadays that the very poor know the answer, that contemplation arises from their condition of sheer hope in You....

Surely also the same is true for the very ill?

The canvas before me also knows something of the answer. You see it, O Lord, the people's everlasting Light.

Sometimes we rest or are held in "supplication" — the plain, simple, ordinary prayer of all the faithful: the asking done by beggar, or by child, or by sorrowing advocate of Your people. Nothing "fancy." Not "fancy prayer." No "centering" or "stages"; no "mansions" or "mountains" — only asking, but incessantly.

And so remaining incessantly in Your

Presence.

day six:

Re-View.

Do I do violence to the painting? Am I forcing it to be "religious"?

Why not choose instead an icon for my prayer? The dear iconographists among us teach us so much about seeing. Their work begins with "natural elements" that are

still dreaming of their creation; they know about mediation, incarnation, Presence. Oh, especially! they know about Presence in a painting.

Isn't my praying before this picture a mistake, an evil very like the "reading-into" that is the supposed bête-noire of verbal interpretation?

The artist knows it is not a religious painting.⁴ He calls it Magie.

But:

I know something about creation and mediation and mystery and Presence.

And so does he.

Order and freedom.

Is the basic question, then, for him and for me and for us: what will hold us open to Your mystery?

+++

Look: light unfurling from a center....

+++

"And death is shattered by the Light from out those darkened Eyes."⁵

+++

After six days....(Gen. 2,2; Mk. 9,2):

The not-quite-elderly nun sits at her place in the chapel. In her hands is an exhibition catalogue. Her consciousness and her speech are scattered and sometimes noisy. But she is quiet now, gazing, gazing.

Is she praying?

Feast of the Holy Cross, 1997⁶

▷◁

NOTES

1. *Belzile: Ordre et liberté*. Catalogue de l'exposition (Rivière-du-Loup, Québec: Le Musée du Bas-Saint-Laurent, novembre 1996). Texte: Charles Bourget. The artist: Louis Belzile (1929-).

2. Their teaching contained a little mnemonic: ACTS.

3. Eric Voegelin's "flux of presence" is an alternative to both "presence" and "absence." It is a phrase devised by his profound understanding of social history.

Bernard Lonergan's "mediated return to immediacy" can help with the question about transcendence and incarnational spirituality.

4. From a response of the artist, Louis Belzile, to these pages, we can take still other hints for prayer and contemplative living:

He speaks of continuing "for forty-five years already to develop a relationship through art." "This persistence of mine," he continues, is due in part to the 'hunger' which identifies itself as being the source of joy and happiness. Yet it is always demanding more with its soft and imperative voice. It is at once exigency and reward."

Thinking of my phrase "a little structure" (for praying), he remarks:

"An artist cannot conceive that a creative process may occur without a support (painting, brushes, etc.). Is it despite or because of the material that we are often driven to a state of 'creation' which means we are usually able to paint for six hours without food, fatigue, or other bodily annoyances? I suppose that your 'being adoration' resembles that experience. For the artist, it is normal and welcomed, because it means times of inspiration." [Letter.]

5. The conclusion of the hymn, "He is the lonely greatness of the world." Text by Madeleine Caron Rock. See *The Summit Choirbook* (Summit, N.J.: Dominican Nuns of the Monastery of Our Lady of the Rosary, 1983), #481.

6. A Spanish translation of "Praying before a Picture" was done by Isabel Gómez-Acebo (Madrid). A copy of this translation is available upon request to Sr. Mary of the Savior at the Farmington Hills monastery.

JOHN THE BAPTIST AND THE DOMINICAN NUNS

Sister Mary Regina, O.P.
Farmington Hills, MI

Dominicans have always held a special affection for Saint John the Baptist. The likeness of preacher and preachers is obvious. In this paper I will express the likeness of the Baptist to the Dominican nuns with particular regard to the way we express Dominican spirituality in our monastic life-style.

God called John the Baptist to his service before his birth. "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you came to birth I consecrated you; I appointed you as prophet to the nations" (Jr 1:4-5). The biblical word to 'know', when said of God, means to choose and to predestine.¹ 'Know' in this sense also means to be intensely loved by God.² John was singled out by God, and his life was eminently a consecrated one, even before he was born. God loved him, chose him and gave him a mission. In Romans 8:29 Paul affirms that God calls "in accordance with his purpose, and turns everything to their good." God has called and consecrated every Dominican nun. Like John the Baptist's own calling, which revealed the purposes of God, so too does ours: "In the cloister the nuns devote themselves totally to God and perpetuate that singular gift which the blessed Father (Dominic) had of bearing sinners, the downtrodden and afflicted in the inmost sanctuary of his compassion" (LCM 35:1).

John arrived at the end of a long line of prophets. One chosen out of many, this great and rugged man had received, even before his birth, the mission to prepare the way for the Lord, beginning in the solitude of the desert, and coming to light at the inception of his public ministry. Dominican nuns, individually and collectively have been called to a unique participation in the contemplative life of the Church. The Fundamental Constitution of the Order offers insights to this reality in number III: "In order that we may be perfected in the love of God and neighbor through this following of Christ, we are incorporated into our Order by profession and consecrated totally to God, and in particular we are dedicated in a new way to the universal Church, 'being appointed entirely for the complete evangelization of the Word of God.'"

John, the man of the desert, the thoroughgoing ascetic, put himself through an ordeal of prayer and preparation "until the day he appeared openly to Israel" (Lk 1:80). The Dominican nun knows, as John the Baptist knew eminently well, that the desert presents both consolations and trials. Locusts and wild honey may not sound appealing as a general diet, yet these were staples among the desert nomads. The trials go deeper than diet. John could give his life as the forerunner of Christ, and would eventually suffer beyond all telling, because he had gained strength from his spiritual battles. Like the Baptist we also combat the spiritual enemy as we live out a

cloistered, contemplative life-style. Our desert is and should be a reality that contains both beautiful flowers and cactus thorns. We secure the consolations of quiet and the solitude to savor the sweetness of the Lord by means of Constitutions and schedule. Alongside of this delightfulness looms the cactus. The desert, a kind of mirror, brings us immediately face to face with ourselves. Obscurity and total abandonment can follow from this lifetime engagement with self-knowledge. In short, we deliver ourselves up to death as the Lord Jesus delivered himself up for our sake (cf. 1 Pt 2:24).

Silence, rather than the eremitical life, is a prime ingredient of the Dominican Nun's desert experience, an experience that covers the entirety of our community life and personal prayer encounters. Charity in our speech and thought, the first and finest rule of silence, clears away the brush and weeds to secure a recollection throughout the day, both at work and at prayer. Our Book of Constitutions presents Saint Dominic as the exemplar: "The Blessed Dominic 'rarely spoke except with God in prayer, or about God, and he exhorted the brethren to do likewise.' Pondering this in their hearts, the nuns should make of their house, and especially their hearts, a place of silence" (LCM 46:I). Silence in the Dominican desert framework is an oasis where we, like John and Dominic, go to slack our thirst, not for water, but for the salvation of all.

The time of service came swiftly for John the Baptist. Luke records that when Jesus began his public ministry he "was about thirty years old" (Lk 3:23). John would have been the very same age when his silence flowered into preaching: "Anyone who has two tunics must share with the one who has none, and anyone with something to eat must do the same" (Lk 3:11). This same spirit animates us today as we search out the full meaning of poverty in our monastic setting. "While in our own way we cooperate in the ministry of our brethren who strive to draw people from the tyranny of riches and turn them to higher things, we must conquer greed in ourselves by conformity with Christ, 'who for our sake became poor so that by his poverty we might become rich'" (LCM 28:I). This Constitution is followed by one equally complementary to John's exhortations: "The spirit of poverty impels us, with lively confidence in the Lord, to place our treasure in the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. It means freedom from enslavement to worldly affairs and even from anxiety about them so that we may bind ourselves more fully to God and devote ourselves more readily to him" (LCM 28:II). Obviously, we cannot open thrift shops and soup kitchens, but as we live the spirit and reality of poverty given us as Dominicans, those things that come in the back door in such abundance, are readily ushered out again to help those in need.

The Holy Spirit figures early in John's life, and again in his public ministry at the Lord's baptism. John, as we know, was sanctified in his mother Elizabeth's womb, and filled with the Holy Spirit, leaped for joy at the voice of Mary and the presence in her of the unborn Savior. At this moment, this graced moment, he received the true anointing of God to eventually preach, admonish, and be the one to recognize the Savior as Bridegroom and Lamb of God. Most meaningful of all, John baptized Jesus, the beloved Son of God. How astonishing is each of these events — how overwhelming all of them considered together. We cannot fathom such grace, yet maybe in our

monastic cloistered life we do indeed mirror the Baptist in all these superlative roles. Yet we do so in humble, hidden ways because like John, we do all in the context of desert quiet and a sweet and solemn love.

The Fundamental Constitution of the Nuns expresses that: "In purity of heart, in living and assiduous contemplation, they love Christ, who is close to the Father's heart" (III). We cannot be the voice of the Baptist who cries out, "Look, there is the Lamb of God!" (Jn 1:29); yet every Dominican cloistered nun knows, as she enters the enclosure of her heart, that her inner voice ceaselessly cries out "Ecce!" (Behold!). We believe that our silent prayer will reveal the presence of Christ to countless persons looking and searching for him all over the world. We urgently desire that all will come to know the Messiah, and we associate keenly with Dominic at the foot of the cross in his sighs and tears. A cloistered Dominican nun is certainly not a "baptizer," but by reason of her baptism, vowed life, and strong Dominican liturgical life, she becomes united to the Church as bride, presenting to the world through prayer, sacrifice and desire the same Bridegroom who was baptized by John in the Jordan.

John the Baptist, called to be prophet, preacher and witness, possessed extraordinary gifts of the Spirit of God. When he baptized Jesus, the Holy Spirit descended "like a dove" (Mt 3:16) on the Savior. Our Constitutions recognize that our lives too reflect the Holy Spirit: "The Holy Spirit also directs the Church through special abilities and charisms. Therefore the prioress, in the exercise of her authority, should carefully discern the particular gifts of the nuns..."(LCM 20:II). Every action we perform is an expression of the virtue of religion: prayer, work, community interaction. All of these, indeed our entire daily existence, hold the possibility of manifesting the seal and holiness of God's Spirit.

John the Baptist is presented in all four Gospels as the preacher, the "voice of one that cries in the wilderness: Prepare the way for the Lord, make his path straight!" (Lk 3:4). Throughout our history Saint Dominic together with his family has also been a "voice" that preaches the Word of God. An early chronicler records it in this way:

"Whilst God's vessel, Dominic, was in Rome and was pouring out his prayers in the presence of God in the basilica of St. Peter for the preservation and extension of the Order which God's right hand was propagating by his care, the hand of God came upon him. He saw Peter and Paul, those princes full of glory, appear. The first, Peter, gave him the staff; Paul, the book; and both added — 'Go and preach; for God hath chosen thee for this ministry.' Then in a flash it seemed to him that he saw his sons scattered throughout the world, going off two by two to preach to the people the Word of God."³

The nuns fall directly into line with Dominic, the brethren, and sisters of the apostolic life in preaching the word of God. We do this in a unique way by pondering, cherishing and nurturing God's word. The nuns do the ground work in the soil of contemplation, while those in the Order who preach in the public arena present the

flower and fruit. The fresh, green Word has been prepared and given by all together in the Order. All members of the Order contemplate, certainly. The nun's contemplation, though, is that first green shoot, the impetus for preaching grace for all Dominicans everywhere.

Indeed, the entire spectrum of our Monastic life assists our ministry of the word: "The purpose of all regular observance, especially enclosure and silence, is that the word of God may dwell abundantly in the monastery. Therefore, the nuns, after **the example of the Precursor**, should prepare the way of the Lord in the desert by their prayer and penance" (LCM 96:II). When the word of God dwells abundantly in the monastery, our preaching becomes a brilliant witness, "a bright and shining light"(Jn 5:35) like John the Baptist's. The New Testament Greek uses two words for light. One, "phōs", is a most luminous ray of light. The other word for light is "luchnos", which indicates a portable lamp or candle light. John carried the candle light, the "luchnos", to prepare the way for the Messiah. Our reflection and recollection on God's word is our candle light. We prepare the way for the entire Order to proclaim and expound the word of the scriptures and of truth. We, the Dominican nuns, participate fundamentally, therefore, in the preaching ministry of the Order.

John the Baptist's final witness was the brutal martyrdom inflicted by Herod who commanded his beheading. *Gaudium et Spes* reminds us of the martyrdom or witness proper to those who engage in a life dedicated to contemplation: "The gifts of the Spirit are manifold. He calls some to bear open witness to the longing for a dwelling place in heaven, and to keep this fresh in the minds of all mankind" (#38). Mankind, by and large, can hardly be aware of our presence. Who interested themselves over John, the desert dweller? We are here to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, a vocation given by God and facilitated by the Order. In the protective shadow of God's wings we have the seal of assurance that our lives as cloistered Dominican nuns have not suffered the sword of John, but the "sword of the spirit," which is the word of God (cf. Eph 6:17).

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NOTES

1. *New Jerusalem Bible* (1985 edition), Jeremiah 1:4, note c, p. 1295.
2. *New Jerusalem Bible* (1998 edition), Amos 3:2, note B, p. 1527.
3. Constantino D'Orvieto, *Legenda S. Dominic*, No. 25, as quoted in M.-H. Vicaire, O.P., *Saint Dominic and His Times* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 230.

COMMENTARY ON THE FUNDAMENTAL CONSTITUTION OF THE NUNS OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS

Sister Marie-Ancilla, O.P.
Lourdes, France

*[This is the first section of a larger commentary on the whole of
the Constitutions. Translation by Sr. Mary Thomas, O.P., Buffalo.
—Ed.]*

INTRODUCTORY LETTER OF FATHER RAFFIN, O.P., BISHOP OF METZ

The Commentary on the Constitutions of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers by Sr. Marie-Ancilla has just reached me.

I have read it with interest and admiration, and also with emotion on seeing the dedication to our beloved deceased brother Jean-René Bouchet who, as I can testify because I have often lived with him, loved the Nuns of the Order so dearly.

This Commentary should help the Nuns to deepen their knowledge of their Constitutions and, through this, the Dominican specificity of their monastic vocation, so strongly insisted on by the Master of the Order, Damian Byrne, in his Letter to the Nuns..

Over the last two decades I have several times had occasion to study monastic constitutional texts drawn up to meet the requirements of the aggiornamento recommended by *Perfectae Caritatis*. The text of the Constitutions of the Nuns of the Order of Preachers contrasts strongly with others because of the quality of its redaction (to the point and brief) and its rootedness in tradition — this latter, illustrated by the unique place given to the Master of the Order, as compared with other religious families. I say this not out of any Dominican chauvinism, but because it seems to me only right to pay tribute to the Brethren and Sisters who have initiated this excellent text.

Have the Sisters exhausted all its riches? My numerous contacts with the Monasteries convince me that the text of the Constitutions still needs further comprehension, and Father Byrne's letter conveys the same message. Hence the exceeding usefulness of the work of Sr. Marie-Ancilla.

The Constitutions of the Nuns, perhaps more than those of the Friars, are impregnated with the spirituality of the Rule of St. Augustine, which is far too little known in our Order (it seems that on one occasion a General Chapter considered eliminating it!), although it is, for the Brethren as well as for the Nuns, a basic reference, or as they say today, indispensable. Which means that we cannot understand the Constitutions without a preliminary return to the Rule, read and studied in the light of the life and work of the great Bishop of Hippo, whom we call "Great Father Augustine" in one of the hymns for August 28th. This commentary on the Constitutions therefore calls for an equally complete work on the *Regula ad Servos Dei*.

The Rule and Constitutions, lived "non sicut servi sub lege, sed sicut liberi sub gratia constituti," not like slaves under the law, but like children free under divine grace, are the best advertisement a monastery can have. Education in the freedom of which the Rule speaks, presupposes a serious knowledge of institutional documents.

August 18, 1992
Feast of Blessed Mannes
Fr. Pierre Raffin, O.P., Bishop of Metz

INTRODUCTION

LCM appeared twenty years ago. Personal reading and reading in community have familiarized us with the text. We all breathe a Dominican sigh of delight as we sense a return to our sources.

Who was not eager to hear Father Duval speak of the commonality of legislation finally established between the Brethren and the Nuns, through adaptation of LCO? Father Vicaire's conferences too held our rapt attention.

But did we truly understand the spiritual challenge of LCM? The evidence of the facts seems to point to something less. The answers we give to young people who ask questions about our religious life seem to indicate that indeed the newness had its charms for us initially, but that the substance of LCM has not truly taken root.

The approbation of LCM has in some sort revived interest and awakened the desire to penetrate the text at a deeper level; the desire to search for its profound cohesion and to sense how monastic tradition and Dominican tradition are being articulated; the desire to realize in our lives the orientations given in the areas of common life, government, obedience, etc., all of which calls for a far-ranging change in attitude toward the way the life has been lived for so many decades!

Then the question arises, who knows the texts of Humbert of Romans which served as sources? Who is familiar with the Augustinian monastic tradition which serves as the background of our Constitutions, etc? Without this information, do we not run the risk of missing many essential points of LCM?

These are the questions this work attempts to address, depending largely on the conferences of Father Vicaire, Father Duval, and Father Bouchet. Their thought has thrown light on the plan or orientation of an article, or on details whose importance should not be overlooked. But the essential aim of this study has been to try to grasp the profound movement of the text, the articulation of all its elements, and their coherence. This explains the method used: analysis, paragraph by paragraph.

The help of Father Vicaire and Father Duval has enabled me to understand certain sections of the text regarding which I lacked information.

The former consented to go through the commentary on the Fundamental Constitution, noting several possible improvements. And the latter made notes for me on the adaptation of the LCO article on obedience to LCM, a thing which I had found particularly difficult to understand.

A parallel work on *The Rule of St. Augustine* and on Church documents concerning religious life which have come out since Vatican II has helped me to understand better to what a point our Constitutions offer a veritable theology of Dominican monastic life, although in places the orchestration of all the sources has not been completed.

Our Constitutions, as Father Bouchet loved to say, should often be meditated upon, if we are to be penetrated through and through with the life-sap of Dominican monasticism. May this work be of help to us in this effort, and lead us to follow with ever greater love in the footsteps of our Father, St. Dominic (Cf. *Libellus*, 109).

Lourdes, March 25, 1992

THE BACKGROUND OF OUR CONSTITUTIONS

In the first place, we should not use our Constitutions like a code of canon law, to be consulted when some case comes up to be solved. In fact, many numbers do not prescribe anything, and yet they are among the most important. (Here there is an essential difference from the preceding Constitutions). These numbers present fundamental values which should effect the unity of the community and give it its Dominican character.

In the Constitutions we can distinguish numbers which give spiritual orientations and numbers which explain how to put them into practice.* The first category of texts is found (not only) in the Fundamental Constitution (which shows the balance formed by all the elements of our life), but also at the beginning of each Chapter. Here, in a few paragraphs, one of the points contained in the Fundamental Constitution is taken up and developed.

There is, therefore, an initial work to be done if we want to read the Constitutions as they should be read, with an eye to both levels. We need to check off all the texts which give fundamental orientations. If we read these numbers in succession, we get a picture of a community of Dominican Nuns.

Another preparatory task consists in comparing the text of LCM with that of LCO. Certain numbers are identical, others slightly modified, others suppressed. Reflection on the reasons for these options will help us to understand the text better.

* In this our Constitutions follow the directives given by *Motu proprio Ecclesiae sanctae* II, 13: "The indispensable union of these two elements, spiritual and juridical, is indispensable to assure a stable base for the fundamental codes of Institutes, to impregnate them with an authentic spirit and make of them a rule of life".

[Here we omit a short chapter on the structure of the Book of Constitutions (LCM). — Ed.]

COMMENTARY

In keeping with the tradition of the Order, our Constitutions are an adaptation of the Constitutions of the Brethren.(1)

In addition to the overall plan (two Distinctions), entire paragraphs are repeated almost word for word. However, the Fundamental Constitutions are quite different. That of LCO was drawn up chiefly by Father Vicaire. Its basis is the bulls granted to St. Dominic for the foundation of his Order. It therefore focuses strongly on preaching, whence the difficulty of reproducing it as it stands for the Nuns.

Our Fundamental Constitution, while emphasizing our Dominican roots, is impregnated with monastic and patristic life-sap. We can sense Father Bouchet's hand here.

Yet the same theme can be found in both Fundamental Constitutions:

Fundamental Constitution of LCO	PLAN	Fundamental Constitution of LCM
I	establishes the aim: basic undertaking	II
II	the Gospel spirit of our undertaking	
III	the profession whereby we commit ourselves to this end, and in this spirit	III
IV	values of the common life: Dominican <u>following of Christ</u>	IV, V
V	ministry proper to the Word of God	
VI	<hr/>	VI

I. NUNS OF THE ORDER OF PREACHERS: ORIGINS (§I)

§I. The nuns of the Order of Preachers came into being when our holy Father Dominic gathered women converts to the Catholic faith in the monastery of Blessed Mary of Prouille. These women, free for God alone, he associated with his "holy preaching" by their prayer and penance. Our holy Father drew up a rule to be followed and constantly showed a father's love and care for these nuns and for others established later in the same way of life. In fact, "they had no other master to instruct them about the Order."(1) Finally, he entrusted them as part of the same Order to the fraternal concern of his sons.

1. Women converts

The unique thing about the first Dominican Nuns was that they were, at the heart of the holy preaching in Prouille, a gathering of mature women converts, whereas in the Middle Ages most monasteries of Cistercian and Benedictine Nuns began to prepare children for the monastic life at the age of eight or nine.

Jordan of Saxony notes this characteristic feature in his account of the foundation of Prouille: "(Diego) set up a monastery to receive some noble women who had been entrusted by their parents to the heretics for their schooling and education, because of poverty".(2)

These women thus converted led a religious life similar to that of nuns of this period — "free for God alone" (3) — but their manner of life already had this characteristic: as Nuns of the Order of Preachers they were "associated with his 'holy preaching' by their prayer and penance."

2. Part of the Order

Regarding the origins of the Dominican Nuns, see the book of M.-H. Vicaire: *The History of St. Dominic*, which discusses the beginnings of Prouille and St. Dominic's influence on the first Nuns.(4)

The letter of Gregory IX to Blessed Jordan of Saxony is particularly valuable for an understanding of the care Dominic took of the Nuns: "In their petition which we have read, they (the Nuns) say that they have been guided by the teaching and example of the Blessed Dominic, then Master of the Order, to renounce the vanities of the world and to choose to serve the Lord according to the Rule of St. Sixtus at Rome...and that the same holy man...arranged that a prior, together with four priests of the same Order, should take care of their spiritual and temporal interests.... It has been stated that they took their origin from a zeal for perfect charity.... They dedicated themselves to your Order and St. Dominic formed them according to the teachings of sacred doctrine."(5)

This last sentence confirms the testimony given by Sr. Cecilia on the part St. Dominic took in the formation of the Sisters: "They had no other master to instruct them about the Order".(6)

II. FUNDAMENTAL PLAN: TO DETERMINE THE GOAL (§II)

From the point of view of the text, a modification was made in the 1971 edition. The addition: "To the brethren, sisters, and lay members of the Order" emphasizes the common aim of the entire Dominican family. The Dominican family, to whom the last number of the Fundamental Constitution of LCO is devoted, thus finds its place in ours as well. But there is perhaps a lack of agreement with the beginning of the paragraph, where charity seems to be reserved to the Brethren and the Nuns! Should the Sisters and lay members not have been mentioned – and also the fraternities of secular priests and the secular institutes – at the beginning of the paragraph?

Paragraph II is essentially made up of quotations: an implicit reference to the prologue of *The Rule of St. Augustine* on the twofold commandment of love: the *Libellus*, 13; the *Bull of Honorius III*; *Isaiah* 55:10.

§II. By their way of life both the friars and the nuns press onward to that perfect love of God and neighbor which is effective in caring for and obtaining the salvation of all people. As the Lord Jesus, the Savior of all, offered himself completely for our salvation, they consider themselves to be truly his members primarily when they are spending themselves totally for souls.(2) There is indeed a diversity of gifts, but one and the same Spirit, one charity, one mercy. The friars, sisters and laity of the Order are "to preach the name of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the world;"(3) the nuns are to seek, ponder, and call upon him in solitude so that the word proceeding from the mouth of God may not return to him empty, but may accomplish those things for which it was sent (cf. Is. 55:10).

1. The service of the Word

At the heart of the paragraph we find the quotation from the Bull of Honorius III which expressed in 1221 the end of the Order as St. Dominic conceived it before his death: "to preach the name of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the world." A longer citation from this text takes up the whole of Paragraph 1 of the Fundamental Constitution of LCO; this shows its importance. We reproduce here the text of LCO and Father Vicaire's commentary on it.

"LCO 1, 1. The purpose of the Order was described by Pope Honorius III in writing to Saint Dominic and his Brethren in these words: 'God, who continually makes his Church fruitful in new children (1), wishing to bring our times into conformity with earlier (apostolic) days and to spread the Catholic faith, has inspired you to embrace a life of poverty and regular observance and to devote yourselves to preaching the Word of God and proclaiming the name of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the world.'"

Father Vicaire's Commentary

"The numerous bulls which Dominic obtained from the pope between 1216 and 1221 (we have some fifty different ones), in particular the bulls of recommendation (1218-1221), contain the most fruitful and authentic definitions of the Order at the time of its foundation. The bulls of recommendation could not actually attain their object, i.e., to convince the bishops of the catholic and salutary character of the Order and persuade them to assign it to its own proper mission, unless they defined, in a concise way but also as completely as possible, the end, proper office, manner of life and competencies of the brethren. According to custom, it was Dominic himself who, in his petition to the Holy See, drew up these definitions, which the pope, by including them in his bulls, supported with the supreme approval of the Church. On the other hand, the continuity and progress of the formulas, even in more secondary bulls, emphasized the value of these brief definitions, which reached a kind of peak in 1221. They then, simultaneously, signified Dominic's full awareness of the idea of the Order and the Church's full confidence in Dominic's Order.

"This is the substance of the aim of the Order, found in LCO 1, 1, and taken from the formula of the bull of January 18, 1221. This last document was in itself secondary. It was a 'brief bull', which granted to Dominic the power to hold back his brethren when the difficulty of their vocation as Preachers tempted them to seek refuge, by actual flight and before being authorized by the Law, in the "more austere" religious groups of the Cistercians or Carthusians. In 1216 Dominic had not received this power (compare K nos. 77 and 81 with K no. 141). The bull signifies therefore that in 1221 there was not, in the opinion of the Sovereign Pontiff, any religious Order superior to that of the Preachers. He gives his reason for this in the body of the bull, in the sentence reproduced in our 1,1. It is an absolutely original text, which defines the Order as an Order of evangelization.

"At this time there was no other specifically missionary Order in the Church in the strict sense of the word. Honorius, a missionary pope, continued to ask help from the Cistercians and Premonstratensians for the pagan missions, as Innocent III had done. But now he was aware that the missionary character was fundamental in the new Order of Preachers. Dominic, through his Brethren, was to carry out his personal plans for the evangelization of the pagans at the next Chapter at Pentecost, opening up to the ministry of the Preachers the missionary sector of Hungary which was directed to the Cumans, that of Dacia, directed to the Baltic regions, and possibly that of Poland; and finally, possibly also, that of Greece, directed to Asia.

"However it is not a matter in our text of the evangelization of pagans only. It is a matter of the universal proclamation of the Gospel, to Christians as well as to non-Christians. The final phrase: 'devote yourselves to preaching the word of God and proclaiming the name of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the world' signifies both types of evangelization, which can be expressly verified in the parallel sentences of the contemporaneous bulls addressed to the Preachers. 'Work without ceasing ... at the evangelization of the word of God, through which the Christian faithful will grow in number and merit' (K no. 145). '(The Preachers) will go to (the Scandinavian) regions ... in order to evangelize the pagans, preaching the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and nourishing the faithful of Christ with the word of God' (K no. 164). The Order of St. Dominic is therefore missionary in the broadest sense of the word."(7) **(End of Father Vicaire's Commentary)**

The Brethren have as their mission the proclamation of the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to all without exception: Jesus saves. They proclaim the Word of salvation, that Word which Dominic read and reread, and in which he discovered the mystery of the Father's love in the cross of Christ. This is what he proclaimed. He drew from communion with Christ crucified a profound understanding of salvation.

The Nuns too ponder the mystery of God which reveals His plan of salvation in Jesus Christ to us: they seek Him, think of Him, invoke Him. They share that love for sinners which dwells in the heart of Christ and the heart of the Father; they desire that the Word of salvation proclaimed by the brethren shall bear fruit, that is, shall lead souls to be converted to the love of God. It is a matter of causing the Word of God to be spread among men, in our own way. It is a vital undertaking: the Word must bear fruit, not merely be heard.

The purpose is the goal we strive to reach, but it also includes the concrete determinations which will enable us to attain this end: for the Nuns, it is primarily prayer. It is through prayer that we achieve, in our own way, the end of the Order.(8)

In the Order, therefore, a single end is sought by all, but in different ways by the Brethren, Sisters, Laity and Nuns. Yet it is "the same Spirit" — the Spirit of love — "who has poured forth charity in our hearts," and therefore the same charity and the same mercy: dominant feature of Dominican spirituality.

2. To spend oneself totally for the salvation of souls

Our paragraph II has a more markedly contemplative dimension than the parallel paragraph in the fundamental constitution of LCO. We are told to return to the fountainhead of zeal to proclaim the Word of God who dwelt in the heart of Dominic.

After having determined the general end of every Christian life, recalled in the preface of the *Rule of St. Augustine* — to love God and then our neighbor — the Dominican way of living this charity is presented to us: to spend oneself entirely for the salvation of souls.

This form of charity is first God's love for all men (1 Tim. 2:4). And like Dominic, we need to enter into this movement of love (communion with God who is love) and consequently share his zeal for the salvation of souls. This is the deepest desire of Dominic's heart, expressed already in his prayer when he was a canon at Osma. At that time he was leading what was considered the contemplative life par excellence: canons represented the prayer of the Church in the heart of the cathedral, while monks lived a life of penance to sanctify themselves and give glory to God.(9) Therefore, before he had begun to preach, Dominic's prayer contained the desire for total identification with Christ: to offer himself entirely for the salvation of souls. The love which gives meaning to the sufferings of Christ is the love He showed us when "He offered Himself completely for our salvation."(10)

Jordan of Saxony, himself formed by St. Dominic, gives a like instruction to Diana d'Andalo: "Read this book which is always before your eyes, this book of life ... which converts souls ... [Contemplate] Jesus your Savior stretched upon the cross like a parchment Where better [can you learn] the lesson of charity?"(11) This charity, he says, is "zeal for souls."

It is not only a question of the charity which formed monastic communion in the twelfth century, but that "true and efficacious charity which procures the salvation of souls," which St. Dominic implored of God.(12) Dominic's heart was so filled with love for the Lord that he participated in the deepest plans of His heart. To him it meant offering himself as Christ did, giving himself with such intensity that the gift won souls.

This bond between the cross and charity is very strongly marked in the Order. The cross is the book which teaches love's art, the book of charity in which Dominic learned to preach. The indispensable book was the book of charity, the book of the cross.(13)

This attitude, typical of Dominican spirituality, had already taken hold of Dominic during the first half of his life, when he had not yet begun to preach. It is here that we find the source of the vocation of the Nuns (cf. the end of II).

III. THE EVANGELICAL SPIRIT OF OUR GOAL (§III)

The call to follow Christ, conversion, hearing the Word, the evangelical counsels, purity and humility of heart, love of Christ: this is indeed the evangelical dimension of our life, recalled in this paragraph.

§III. Called by God, like Mary, to sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to his words (cf. Lk. 10:39), they are converted to the Lord, withdrawing from the empty preoccupations and illusions of the world. Forgetting what lies behind and reaching out for what lies ahead (cf. Phil. 3:13), they are consecrated to God by public vows through profession of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience. In purity and humility of heart, in living and assiduous contemplation, they love Christ, who is close to the Father's heart.

1. The call

The monastic life, our seeking God, is a response to the Lord's call to us: "Come, follow Me." It is not we who have first sought the Lord, it is he who has come to seek us. He has called us. It is the call to follow the Lord which was heard by Abraham, by the Apostles, by the rich young man, by St. Anthony, St. Augustine, and the rest. For us, it is the call to listen to the Word like Mary. God calls us to join him so as to lead us to the end which is sought: the contemplative life, union with him in love.

Our response to this call is a way of living the Gospel, of following Christ. It is first of all a conversion.(14)

2. Mary, symbol of the contemplative life

Traditionally, Mary is a symbol of the contemplative life because she listened to the Word (Lk. 10:39).(15) Of course we recall in particular St. Augustine's homilies on Mary.(16) For him, Mary, in contrast with Martha, represents our activity in eternity: contemplation of the Truth. Enjoyment of the wordless Word is reserved for eternal life in the homeland. But Mary, if she is the symbol of our future condition, had herself a foretaste of this contemplation. In this sense she is the type of the Church tending toward her Lord, feeding on the word in Scripture. This attraction to God causes us to stretch forward (Phil 3:13).(17) This is our vocation: to taste the Word, to tend wholly toward the Lord, toward the Word of the Father. We find this priority given to prayer and to the Scriptures, in St. Dominic.

Note that Mary was seated. Sitting is traditionally associated with the contemplative life. Mary's seated position has become the image of the one who seeks to live by God alone in renunciation of the world.(18) It is interesting that Cassian quoted Lk. 10:39 and Phil 3:13, in his first conference on purity of heart.(19)

3. Conversion

This element, essential to all monastic life, is especially so for us: our first Sisters were converts.

To be converted indicates a turn about (in Greek the word is used for a military half-turn): it is to answer a call.

The call of God who invites us to follow him necessitates a conversion. *Conversio ad Deum* is an expression dear to St. Augustine. By it he means the passage of the sinner — far

from God in the land of unlikeness, like the prodigal son – to the man who has been converted interiorly.(20) Therefore *dissimilitudinis* is translated as "withdrawing from the empty preoccupations and illusions of the world" in LCM 1:III. Augustine often emphasizes, too, that conversion was the state of the first Christian community, where all "were converted to the perfect way."(21)

Again, we find in LCM 1:III, that the Nuns avoid "the empty preoccupations of the world." This is an expression dear to Cassian (22) who connects it with Lk. 21:34. He understands by this "all that exceeds the necessities of daily life."(23) We must guard against them, he says, for "they weigh down the soul who is subject to them, separating her from God and lowering her to the level of the earth."(24) The "illusions of the world" or the "disease of worldly fortune" are major obstacles to continual prayer. They impede the monk from "tending toward God with his whole being."(25)

We will encounter solicitude for the things of the world again in LCM 28,II; and 99 (cf. Mt. 13:22).

This conversion is a deepening of our baptismal grace. The first monastic communities were composed of men in the process of conversion, and the community encouraged this conversion by appropriate means. The monks consecrated their entire lives to this experience of conversion which is the call of every Christian. What must we do to be saved? This was the question put by candidates to the monastic life.(26)

This is why monasteries were called houses of conversion; and there should still be today houses where those who have been converted to God our Savior, and Jesus Christ, live. Our whole life is a life of conversion, an appeal to the mercy of God, for we are disfigured by sin.

4. Phil. 3:13

This verse is one of those most frequently used in monastic tradition; it shows the dynamism of conversion.

For Anthony, it expresses the desire to serve Christ more and more (and it is good to emphasize that this desire was born in him when he heard the Word of God which sparked his conversion). Cassian sees in it the rejection of vices and the search for purity of heart; Augustine reads in it the tension of our present life – where contemplation has just begun – drawing us to the fullness of contemplative prayer when we shall have the Word for our nourishment.(27)

Perhaps there is also in this quotation a reminder of what a monk is: a pilgrim advancing in the search for Christ.

5. Evangelical counsels and public vows

"They are consecrated to God by public vows through profession of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience."

We are moving from the patristic tradition to canon law! We have here the teaching of Vatican II on religious life, taken up in the [subsequent] official texts of the Church. Let me point out that it is a matter of a modification in relation to the 1971 Constitutions, introduced by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life (CIVCSVA) in conformity with the Code of Canon Law.(28)

This sentence is not in harmony with our tradition and reflects a concept of the following of Christ which is narrower than the Dominican *sequela Christi*. It was against this view that Father Vicaire rightly fought at the time of the preparation of LCO.

According to this concept, he said in effect, "to follow Christ means to imitate him by practicing the three counsels which he gave us: chastity, poverty, and obedience. We do this in committing ourselves to the three vows. This imitation, considered as the common foundation of religious life, will be identical for all religious. The religious, then, will be the man who, pronouncing the three vows, commits himself to the three counsels, thereby imitating Christ.

"However, there is much more in our Dominican manner of following Christ than the three counsels. There is above all the essence of the *vita apostolica*: the common life (imitation of the common life of the Apostles gathered around Christ) which is an evangelical counsel."(29)

Let us recall that Humbert of Romans, in his *Letter on the Observance of the Regular Life*, places humility and patience on the same level with obedience, chastity, and poverty: to imitate Christ includes far more than the three counsels.

Under the title "The Following of Christ", Section I of LCM includes the common life; obedience, chastity, poverty; regular observance; prayer; hearing, studying and keeping the Word of God; and work.

The uniformity imposed by the Code of Canon Law is therefore regrettable and breaks the unity of theme in paragraph III. But since the formula of profession has not been changed to introduce the three vows, the Dominican goal has not been fundamentally affected.

We can now analyze in more detail the sentence we are studying.

a. Through the profession of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience...

It is by the profession of the three evangelical counsels that the Code of Canon Law, following *Lumen Gentium* 43, defines membership in an Institute of Consecrated Life.(30) The expression "profession of the evangelical counsels" is surprising because the term profession is not used here in its classical sense. To make profession means: to publicly assume a solemn engagement to strive for the perfection of charity, and this by the practice of the evangelical counsels; a practice to which the religious commits himself by vows (definition given by M.-J. Nicolas).

But the practice of the evangelical counsels is not exclusive to religious; it also characterizes the other Institutes of Consecrated Life. In the first case it is a question of a commitment by vows, in the second an engagement which takes other forms. But since there is no one term to include the two ways of living the evangelical counsels, the Council Fathers retained the term profession, which thus has two meanings.(31)

The order of the counsels should also be noted: it follows the conciliar texts and not that of our Distinction I.

b. They are consecrated to God

"Deo consecrantur": they are consecrated to God (cf. LCM 24:I). This expression comes from *Lumen Gentium* No. 44, and almost all translations give it the opposite meaning. The expression is often translated, "they consecrate themselves to God." But it is God who consecrates; religious do not consecrate themselves. God is the principal author of consecration (32) which is effected through the ministry of the Church (33) in response to the call heard. But the gift of self to God is indeed necessary in order that there may be a consecration.

This consecration is a particular consecration (LG 44) which deepens baptismal consecration. It establishes a true covenant relationship: a spousal covenant, a covenant in communion, a covenant in mission (33²). (The meaning of the word consecration is very different here from that used in the title of the first Chapter of the first Distinction).

c. A vow or vows?

We do not pronounce vows, but a single vow which is our profession: "I make profession". (Cf. Constitutions of St. Sixtus: "Since you live under the same rules and the same vow of profession"; see also the Primitive Constitutions of the Brethren).

Until the thirteenth century profession was a commitment to religious life: one offered oneself to God. We live therefore under the vow of a unique profession which includes

everything.(34) By profession, we take on new ways of realizing our baptismal consecration, we take more radical means of living out our conversion to God. By the vow of our profession, we accept the way of life of the Order.(35) The one vow of our profession contains within it the gift of love for God and our commitment to proclaim the Gospel for the salvation of all, along with, of course, humility, the common life, poverty, prayer, and obedience.(36)

The introduction of the three public vows (37) in our Fundamental Constitution dims the content of our Dominican profession.

The reason for this was certainly to indicate fully what the Church considers as specific to religious consecration: public vows (LG 44). See the Code of Canon Law: "A religious institute is a society in which, in accordance with their own law, the members pronounce public vows..." (38)

It is the public vows, in effect, which differentiate religious from other Institutes of consecrated life: "The very nature of the religious vocation implies a public testimony rendered to Christ and to the Church. Religious profession is made through vows which the Church receives publicly."(39)

6. They love Christ

Our following of Christ tends to one sole end: to love Christ. In order to bring out this following of Christ clearly, Father Vicaire proposes that we understand the close of Paragraph III in this way: "They follow the One whom they love, Christ, who is wholly turned to the Father." The emphasis is placed on love; contemplation, our gaze fixed on the Lord. It is impregnated with love.

7. Purity and humility of heart.

This love is possible only in a certain climate: that of purity and humility of heart. Here we have two biblical (Ps. 50; Beatitudes) and monastic (40) values. They have a central place for the desert Fathers, as central as in Augustine monastic tradition and Dominican tradition.

a. Purity of heart

All that is said of purity of heart should be read in the light of Matthew 5:8. It is the attitude of an unencumbered heart where only charity dwells. For Cassian purity of heart is the charity which leads to contemplation.(41) In the *Libellus*, Jordan of Saxony tells us, moreover, that St. Dominic made progress in purity of heart thanks to reading Cassian.

b. Humility

This is the first virtue which one who wishes to be a monk should strive for. It hollows out the soul and makes it capable of receiving grace, charity.

Humility is a virtue very present at the beginnings of the Order.(42) St. Dominic himself began with his first Brethren to descend the degrees of humility (reference to the *Rule of St. Benedict*).(43) The witnesses at the Process of Canonization reported that he despised himself.(44) Humbert of Romans' *Letter on the Observance of Regular Life* also gives a large place to humility, and the references to the Desert Fathers are numerous.(45)

Father Vicaire also insists on the communal dimension of humility — it is the humility of the "school of the poor ones of Christ"(46) — and on the fact that it is the principal reason behind mendicant poverty. Furthermore, if St. Dominic placed it at the head of the instructions which he gave to the novice masters, it was because he considered it as the first of the counsels to be committed to in the following of Christ.(47)

IV. OUR DOMINICAN *FOLLOWING OF CHRIST* (§4, §5)

The fundamental point of our following of Christ is a way of life in common in imitation of the first community in Jerusalem. Our following of Christ is not primarily an individual imitation of Christ, but a common life of unanimity. One does not enter the monastery primarily for prayer, but to form a community whose principle function will be prayer (§4); our way of life in which prayer holds a predominant place draws us to what the Church calls "the state of contemplative life." Whence we have paragraph 5 on the purely contemplative life.

1. A praying community (§4) (48)

This paragraph centers around three quotations from Scripture: Acts 2:42; 1:14; 2 Cor. 3:18.

IV. The nuns offer a sacrifice of praise to God especially through the celebration of the liturgy in imitation of the Church in Jerusalem which was drawn together by the teaching of the Apostles and united in daily prayer (cf. Acts 2:42). Persevering in prayer with Mary the Mother of Jesus, they ardently long for the fullness of the Holy Spirit, so that with unveiled face they may reflect the glory of the Lord and be transformed into his image from splendor to splendor by the Spirit of the Lord (cf. 2 Cor. 3:18).

a. Acts 2, 42

The emphasis is placed on two aspects of the first community in Jerusalem: hearing the Word of the apostles which gathers the community together, and unanimity in prayer. It is the same for our community. It is a search for truth, fed by listening to the Word which will seal our unanimity and give it its Dominican tonality. And prayer will flow from the unanimity of the community.

Through the liturgy, which is the communal and ecclesial form of our prayer, our community is truly the Church at prayer. Our heart is then turned to the praise of God, to the Church's thanksgiving for the marvels of salvation.

b. Acts, 1:4

Another note of our community at prayer: it images the apostolic community gathered around Mary and persevering in the prayer which draws down the promised Spirit.

To await the fullness of the Spirit is to aspire to the charity of God which the Spirit pours forth in our heart and which gives us our true face, the face of a child of God.

c. 2 Cor. 3:18

The Latin text uses *speculentur* which evokes the image of a mirror. Augustine explains this word as follows: "'contemplating' (*speculantes*), that is, 'seeing as in a mirror' (*per speculum*)."(49)

This verse is a key verse for the patristic theology of the image, of our divinization by the Holy Spirit, through whom we can arrive at likeness to God, at a perfect resemblance of the glorified Son, the Image of God.(50)

We contemplate the glory of God in the glory of Christ glorified, as in a mirror, and this contemplated glory is reflected on our unveiled (purified) countenance, which may in its turn be compared to a mirror. But only after death will this transformation be total: the Spirit will then totally transform us, body and soul, into the image of Christ in glory.

2. A Dominican contemplative life (§5)

This paragraph mentions all the elements which *Perfectae caritatis* has retained to characterize the contemplative life, which gives us the label "the state of contemplative life" in the Church! But it is interesting to note that the two characteristic elements of our Dominican vocation have been added: unanimity and study.

V. The nuns seek God by observing the norms of the purely contemplative life, by maintaining their withdrawal from the world by enclosure and silence, by working diligently, studying the truth eagerly, searching the Scriptures with ardent heart, praying intently, willingly practicing penance, pursuing communion through their manner of government, in purity of conscience and the joy of sisterly concord, "in freedom of spirit".(4) It is God who now makes them dwell together in unity (5) and on the last day will gather into the Holy City a people acquired as his own. In the midst of the Church (6) their growth in charity is mysteriously fruitful for the growth of the people of God. By their hidden life they proclaim prophetically that in Christ alone is true happiness to be found, here by grace and afterwards in glory.

a. A purely contemplative life

First comes the affirmation of what characterizes the way in which the Church situates us: a form of purely contemplative life (cf. PC 7),(51) that is, a form of life in which everything is ordered to union with God, to the discovery of his love, to the search for God, to prayer, to intercession (cf. LCM 1, §§ 1,2). It is this form of life which will be the proper mode by which we shall live out the vocation of the Order.

The monastery is in fact the place where we are gathered together in concord to seek God; and the end of all observance is to allow us to be mindful of God without ceasing and to welcome the Word as Mary did (*Ibid.*, §3). To seek God, to be mindful of God, to guard one's heart, to pray without ceasing: so many expressions of the contemplative life which we seek to live.

There follows an enumeration of the ways which will help us to attain this end.

b. Withdrawal from the world

Withdrawal from the world — *a mundi secessu* (PC 7) — is the equivalent of the Greek term from which we get the word "anchorite."(52) It is characterized by enclosure and silence. To be withdrawn from the world is to be occupied only with the Kingdom of God. This evokes the monastic theme of the desert (53), but we have to give it the specific form which is ours.(54) Rather than a withdrawal far from people, it is a matter of fleeing from what would turn us away from sole occupation with the Kingdom.

c. Work

A change has been made regarding the 1971 text: now work is spoken of, and no longer manual work. This correction was made because the expression "*manibus laborantes*" of Humbert of Romans was offensive to Anglo Saxons! (Père Duval). But really the current expression corresponds better to the actual text of the Constitutions, where intellectual work is also considered a kind of work the nuns may engage in.

d. Study

"Eager in the study of Truth" (LCO 40, taken up in LCM 35:II), was added to the 1971 text, which harmonizes the fundamental Constitution with the new text of the Constitutions. Father de Couesnongle had said that Constitutions lacking a chapter on study would not be recognized as Dominican: study is in fact an essential element of our observance. But do we perhaps need to question ourselves on this subject? How much study is there in our life, concretely?

Study allows us to penetrate the mystery of God, to have a better understanding of Scripture: it is the substratum of *lectio divina*. It is through study that our search for the truth is expedited. Now it is the known truth, as Father Vicaire stresses, that makes us grow in love. Study is therefore indispensable in making the unanimity of our Dominican community grow. Its usefulness can be summarized in three points (56):

- to purify the heart: it (study) turns us away from what is evil in order to turn us toward the Truth, toward God.
- to know God: to understand sacred Scripture, we need to think correctly.
- to lead to hesychia: study helps to put us in a state of tranquillity and calm, an essential condition for prayer.

e. *Lectio divina*

The "heart on fire" recalls the disciples of Emmaus, instructed in the Scriptures by the risen Christ himself (Lk. 24:32). *Lectio divina* is primarily all this: a personal encounter with Christ who instructs us, with the "interior Master" (Augustine) who reveals to us something of his mystery. It is the prayerful reading of Scripture.

Augustine tells us that without assiduous and ardent supplication, the Word of God remains incomprehensible. "He grants the gift of understanding in answer to prayer, he who has given us the gift of his Word without our prayer".(57)

f. Prayer

"Constant in prayer" is taken from Rom. 12:12 (cf. Augustine, *Rule*, 1). It is a matter of praying without ceasing, with constancy, while feeding our prayer with the reading of the Word which is an encounter with Christ the Savior.(58) Here is Jacques Leclercq's comment on the "constant prayer" of PC 7: "Christian spirituality of all times has made of the searching of *oratio continua* one of the major preoccupations of the faithful who desire to live in union with the Lord. The 'constant prayer' of which Clement of Alexandria speaks, the constant 'mindfulness of God' mentioned by so many monastic authors of antiquity, the monks of the East, and from Cassian to Bernard...all this is evoked here in these two words, the first of which conveys the idea of a continuity resulting from the succession, alternation, and repetition of frequent acts: *assiduus potius quam frequens* (assiduous rather than frequent) we read in more than one ancient text on the subject of contemplative prayer."(59)

g. Penance

Ready penance is taken from PC 7: "in alacri paenitentia". "Alacrity is the joyous spirit, the ardent enthusiasm which indicates vitality. '*Et alacri fide suscipiamus solemne jejunium...*' ('And let us begin the solemn fast with lively faith'), said St. Leo in speaking of Lent.(60) This manner of speaking was retained in monasticism. It expressed well the idea of a fervent penitence, preparing, and then manifesting, the soul's full flowering."(61)

It is a matter of penitence, not penances. Penitence refers to the general, penitential aspect proper to every religious life, being a conversion of life: be converted, change your manner of life. Cf. "*Paenitemini et credite Evangelio.*" (62)

The religious should be in a state of continual conversion (cf. the *conversio morum* of the Benedictines); and on the other hand, s/he likewise shares in the penitence of Christ, then in the death of Christ, so as to have a part in his resurrection.

Penance practiced in common is the first means, Father Vicaire stresses, by which we ask for and receive the conversion which we beg the Lord to work in us through his Word.(63)

h. Government

Government concerns the entire community. It is a place where unanimity is expressed, since it has for its end to guide the community toward its goal, which is precisely to have one mind and heart in God.

i. Purity of conscience

Cf. purity of heart, LCM 1:III. (Part III, #7 above)

j. Concord and unanimity

Concordia recalls the *concorditer* and the *cor unum* of the *Rule of St. Augustine*. It is a matter of the unity of minds and hearts in imitation of the community in Jerusalem (Acts 1:14; 2:46; 4:24, 32a; 5:12; 8:6).(64)

Concord is a gift of God; it is God who makes sisters dwell together in unity in the house (Ps. 67:7).

Concord is the keystone of Augustinian monasticism and most particularly of the *Rule*: it is the end for which the members are gathered together in community, in the image of the first community in Jerusalem. For Augustine, it is a fruit of charity;(65) it has its source in the Holy Spirit;(66) it is the condition for authentic prayer;(67) it is an anticipation of life in the Kingdom, where it finds its complete fulfillment.(68)

If concord is essential in the ideal of Augustinian monastic life, it is no less so in the Dominican ideal. Father Vicaire presents the "fascination for unanimity" as a fundamental trait of St. Dominic.(69) Humbert of Romans also sees in unanimity the summit of charity. It is unity of thought in faith, community of wills in charity, whence flows unity of action and in sentiments. He recalls the role of unanimity in the primitive Church, which should also be practiced in the Order:

"Woe to those who have not yet been moved by the efficacious prayer of Christ to the Father (Jn. 17), the example of such a blessed multitude (Acts), and the exceeding great desire of the Apostle Paul (Phil.), to seek in every way possible and to conserve fraternal unanimity... Happy the unanimity which gives all the one spirit, makes them grow as one, defend the faith as one, do the works of faith as one, be assiduous in prayer as one, give themselves to contemplation as one, devote themselves as one to the works of mercy, and work together as one at sacred doctrine. All this unanimity is oneness of spirit in God, and is from God. One enters into such unanimity by striving to adhere to God alone... Thus, if on the one hand all should preserve unity of spirit in general with great care, according to the word of the Apostle (Eph. 4); and if, on the other hand, those who live under the Rule of the Blessed Augustine are obliged to this in a special way, on account of the precept of the Rule, still it is most particularly incumbent upon all Friars Preachers, because of what has just been said, since they are bound to it by a general reason, a special reason, and a particular reason." (70)

In the Order this unanimity has an apostolic dimension which was only initiated in the Rule. St. Dominic sought to realize it among men. He wished to draw all men together in unanimity in the Church of Christ, through preaching.

Like him, the nuns are "in the midst of the Church," and with the brethren they share in gathering all men together in unanimity in the People of God. But it is uniquely through charity that they make their contribution, not by preaching, by virtue of a hidden fruitfulness(PC 7). (71)

By their unanimity, the nuns are also an eschatological sign of the unity to which all are called, in the Kingdom.(72)

k. A hidden life

A hidden life is a life which allows of leisure (*otium*, LCM 36), and repose (*quies*, LCM 74:IV), and which allows one to sit down (*sedere*, LCM 1:III). It is a matter of associating oneself, through faith, with the mystery of the risen Christ. It implies a complete program of renunciation

of the world and the search for God. The nuns lead a hidden life, far from the public eye, in order to find their true country, heaven — anticipated by uniting themselves to Christ.(73)

If unanimity has an eschatological dimension, the hidden life does also. The one proclaims the communion of all men with each other and with God, and the other, the happiness which is promised to all men: to live by Christ, to feed on the Word. This blessedness which is Christ (74) is moreover the source of communion.

We find here a teaching very close to that which St. Augustine gives in his Sermons on Mary. Like her, the nuns leave all things behind and live a hidden life, busy seeking the one thing necessary, which does not pass away; Christ is their sole happiness in the present time; one day this will be the condition of all those who are busied now with giving their attention, like Martha, to the multiple needs of charity toward the neighbor.

"Whence came the joy, the happiness of Mary, when she listened at the feet of Jesus?... What was she eating? What was she drinking interiorly with such great eagerness? Justice, truth. Yes, she found her delight in truth, she listened to truth, she ardently desired truth, she sighed after truth... She had her fill of truth, yet truth was in no way diminished or lessened. Whence came the joy, the happiness of Mary? I linger over this thought, because I find in it great sweetness. I am not afraid to say it: she fed on the One to whom she listened. If she fed on truth, had He not said, 'I am the truth' (Jn. 14:6)? And what more can I say? She fed on Him as on true bread ... which nourished her without suffering the slightest change... Who would dare to say that if here below we are nourished by truth, it will cease to be our nourishment when we shall have come to the dwelling place of immortality?" (75)

V. THE CONSTITUTIONS, THE CALL TO FREEDOM AND MIRROR OF OUR LIFE (§6)

VI. The nuns profess obedience according to these same Constitutions, "not like slaves under the law, but like free women under grace;"(7) they will ponder them wisely, finding in them a mirror in which to test their own fidelity to their call from God. So their life will be "conducive to salvation for themselves, an example to others, a joy to the angels, and pleasing to God."(8)

The primitive text was: "making profession to the one Master of the Order according to the same institutions," to mark the unity of the Order. But the CIVCSVA (Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life) modified it (Père Duval). The reason for the change is probably the same as that for n. 17:II.

The approved text must be well understood: "making profession of obedience" does not mean: we pronounce a single vow, the vow of obedience. It is a matter of our profession, of which obedience is only one element. The fact that there is a promise of obedience in the formula of profession could lead to confusion. Profession of obedience is to be taken in the sense of the gift of one's whole life to God: it is not a matter of the promise of obedience.(76)

Let us note that it is not said that we make profession to observe the Constitutions, but that we make profession according to the Constitutions.(77) (Institutions include the Constitutions and all the other laws of the Order which govern the nuns.) What is essential is the values which they contain. To live according to the Constitutions is to be faithful to the call of God as the Lord has willed it for us, and the Constitutions show us the way to follow in order to respond to this call, as beings free under grace. This quotation from the *Rule* tells us that it is love which is engaged. Only the person who loves what is commanded because she recognizes in it the expression of the will of God can be said to obey freely. It is a movement of delight that impels her to obey what is enjoined, not a fear of punishment.

The Constitutions are like a mirror which shows us our face as the face of a child of God, our life imitating Christ according to our own vocation. Augustine was the first to use this theme of the mirror (James 1:23).

The mirror par excellence is Scripture: cf. *De speculo*, which gives a compilation of Scriptural texts about man's moral life in order to help one who already possesses the faith and sincerely wishes to obey God.⁽⁷⁸⁾ Like the Scriptures, like the *Rule*, the Constitutions are given the title of a mirror, which indicates that they are a teaching and not a law in the modern sense of the word. They do not give obligations to be fulfilled and then left behind, but they place before our eyes the ideal to which we have been called, and indicate the way we should follow in order to be faithful to it. It is by examining them and meditating on them that we learn to know our ideal better, to carry out the plan St. Dominic determined for us, to form a truly Dominican community.

The paragraph closes with a quotation from the *Libellus* which recalls the example of holiness left by the first nuns of Prouille: we are invited to follow them.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Fundamental Constitution of LCM presents us with a summary of our Dominican monastic life in an apparently very simple way: a few verses of Scripture and some quotations taken from the sources of our Order form its framework. But through this there flows in a single movement, in profound unity, all that is at the heart of monastic tradition and of St. Dominic's plan. The question someone might ask about the "non-unity" of our roots (are we nuns? are we Dominicans?) cancels itself out. What is being proposed to us is a synthesis.

This text is also an invitation to go beneath the surface of what is being said. The quotations selected resonate with riches which are only hinted at, and we are invited to grasp all their inner harmonies. At each line traces of Anthony, or Augustine, or Cassian, or Dominic, or Humbert of Romans, appear. And it is only by exploring the depths of the Gospel witness of all these saints that we can truly see in the mirror of our Constitutions all the richness of the Lord's call and the gifts he is giving us in order to respond to it.

Our Fundamental Constitution also takes up the principal elements of the Conciliar texts on contemplative religious life. It contains first of all the definition of religious life given in the Code of Canon Law: to profess the three evangelical counsels by public vows. It also integrates the essential elements of *Perfectae Caritatis* 7 on the contemplative life: withdrawal from the world in solitude and silence (which have become enclosure and silence), prayer, joyful penance, freedom for God alone, the offering to God of a sacrifice of praise, contributing to extend the People of God by a hidden fruitfulness.

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NOTES TO FUNDAMENTAL CONSTITUTION TEXTS

- (1) Bl. Cecilia, *Miracula S. Dominici*, n. 7.
- (2) Cf. Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus*, n. 13.
- (3) Honorius III, 18 January, 1221.
- (4) Innocent IV, 11 May, 1252.

- (5) Cf. *Rule of St. Augustine*, I, 2.
- (6) *In medio ecclesiae*: the opening words in the Mass of St. Dominic since his canonization; cf. M.-H. Vicaire, *History of St. Dominic*, vol. 1.
- (7) *Rule of St. Augustine*, VIII, 1; feminine version.
- (8) Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus*, n. 27. Cf. Humbert of Romans, *Legenda S. Dominici*, n. 27.

NOTES TO COMMENTARY

- (1) M.-H. Vicaire, *Les soeurs dominicaines doivent-elles faire des emprunts au LCO des frères?*, Conference, Chalais, 1969. (Should the Dominican sisters borrow from the LCO of the brethren?)
- (2) Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus*, 27.
- (3) PC 7 characterizes the contemplative life in these three words: *solī Deo vacent*. J. Leclercq comments on them as follows: "The first two were often used, in St. Gregory the Great's Life of St. Benedict as well as in many other texts, to describe the monastic and contemplative vocation. And very often they are associated with the word used here, which is borrowed from biblical language: *Vacate et videte*...It is a matter of refraining from all occupations not ordered to continual prayer, of finding this leisure difficult to maintain, this interior repose so contrary to natural human agitation, so as to enjoy a spiritual sabbath. The state of the contemplative life is composed of this constant availability, this openness to God which must ceaselessly be renewed and regained. This relaxed attitude in the presence of God alone cannot be attained, normally and in an institution, under conditions less than those just mentioned: solitude, prayer, and penance;" in J. Leclercq, "Vie contemplative et monachisme d'après Vatican II," *Gregorianum*, 47, 1966, p. 503. Cf. J. Leclercq, *Studies on medieval monastic vocabulary* (Rome: [Studia Anselmiana, 48], 1961), pp. 29-31; 161; 165; *Monastic leisure, Studies on the vocabulary of contemplation of the Middle Ages* (Rome: [Studia Anselmiana, 51], 1963), p. 183.
- (4) M.-H. Vicaire, *Histoire de Saint Dominique*, v. 1 (Cerf, Paris, 1982), pp. 241-274. It seems that the foundation of Prouille should be attributed to Diego even though Dominic was "its father, nourisher and legislator"; cf. G. Bedouelle, *Dominic or the grace of the Word* (Ignatius, 1987), pp. 71-72. The first sentence of the fundamental constitution could therefore perhaps be interpreted differently.
- (5) Chronicles of the monastery of St. Sixtus and St. Dominic and Sixtus at Rome, vol. 1, Levanto, 1919, pp. xxviii-xxix.
- (6) Sr. Cecilia, Miracles of St. Dominic, 6.
- (7) M.-H. Vicaire, "La constitution fondamentale des Frères Prêcheurs", *La vie dominicaine de Fribourg* (Juillet-Aout, 1973), n. 4, pp. 292-294.
- (8) M.-H. Vicaire, *Via Dominici* - The fundamental constitution, Conference, Chalais, 1969.
- (9) J.-R. Bouchet, *Prayer for the salvation of all men*, Conference, Lourdes.
- (10) Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus*, 13.
- (11) Jordan of Saxony, Letter 45 in Letters to Diana d'Andalo.
- (12) Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus*, 13.
- (13) "The brethren learned to read from the features of Christ crucified, because this was the book which taught the art of loving" (*Frachet*, 217). "A student, captivated by [Dominic's] eloquence and his knowledge of sacred scripture, asked him what book he had studied from. 'My son,' he replied, 'from the book of charity; I have studied this more than any other, because it teaches everything'" (*Lives of the Brethren*, II, XXVI).
- (14) J.-R. Bouchet, "L'appel," disc 80001, *Naissance de la vie religieuse*, National Vocation Center, 106 rue du Bac, 75341 Paris Cedex 07.
- (15) Cassian, *Collations*, I, 8; St. Augustine, *Sermons* 103; 104; 169; 179; 255; 352.
- (16) Cf. Sermons cited in Note 15.

- (17) Phil. 3:13, quoted in Sermon 255, 6; 169, 17-18; Confessions, XI, 39. On the use of Phil. 3:13 by St. Augustine, see I. Bochet, *Le désir de Dieu, Etudes Augustiniennes*, Paris, 1982, pp. 131-142.
- (18) Cf. Jerome, *Epist.*, 22, 24, 6; J. Leclercq, "Le devoir de s'asseoir", *Chances de la spiritualité occidentale*, Cerf, Paris, 1966, pp. 313-328.
- (19) Cassian, *Coll.*, I, 8, 5.
- (20) On the *regio dissimilitudinis*, see B.A., 13, note 26, pp. 689-693.
- (21) Augustine, *S.*, 77, 4.
- (22) Cassian, *Coll.*, IX, 5; cf. IX, 3; X, 10.
- (23) *Ibid.*, IX, 5.
- (24) *Ibid.*
- (25) *Ibid.*, IX, 6.
- (26) J.-R. Bouchet, "L'appel", disk. 80001.
- (27) Athanasius, *Life of St. Antony*, 7; Cassian, *Coll.*, I, 5; cf. note 17.
- (28) CIC, can. 607, §2; *Ibid.*, can. 598, §1: "Each institute ... is to define in its constitutions the manner in which the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty, and obedience are to be observed in its way of life".
- (29) M.-H. Vicaire, *The Dominican following of Christ*, 3rd Conference, Chalais, 1969.
- (30) Cf. CIC, can. 573.
- (31) J.-M. Tillard and Y. Congar, *L'adaptation et la rénovation de la vie religieuse*, Coll. "Unam sanctam", 62 (Cerf: Paris, 1967), pp. 98-99.
- (32) St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa IIae, q. 88, a. 7, ad 1.
- (33) Cf. CIC, can. 654.
- (33 ²) EE 5.
- (34) J.-M. Tillard, *Devant Dieu et pour le monde, le projet des religieux* (Cerf: Paris, 1974), pp. 362-363.
- (35) M.-H. Vicaire, *op. cit.* in note (29).
- (36) *Ibid.*
- (37) CIC, can. 607, §2.
- (38) *Ibid.*
- (39) EE, 10; cf. *Ibid.*, 9; CIC, can. 654.
- (40) J.-R. Bouchet, "La Prière", disc 80005.
- (41) Cassian, *Coll.*, I, 7.
- (42) *Primitive constitutions of the brethren*, XIII.
- (43) Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus*, 38; cf. M.-H. Vicaire, *St. Dominic and His Brethren, Gospel or Crusade?* (Cerf: Paris, 1967), note 21, p. 147.
- (44) Process of Canonization, Toulouse, 3, 13.
- (45) Bl. Humbert of Romans, *Letters*, ch. XXXIV-XL, in *Opera de vita regulari*, v. 1 (Rome, 1888), pp. 21-23.
- (46) Jordan of Saxony, *Libellus*, 72.
- (47) M.-H. Vicaire, *The Dominican Following of Christ*, Conference 3, Chalais, 1969.
- (48) A. Duval, *L'esprit des constitutions*, Conference, Lourdes.
- (49) Augustine, *De Trin.*, XV, 8, 14; cf. XIV, 17, 23.
- (50) H. Crouzel, *Théologie de l'image chez Origène*, Coll. Théologie, 34 (Paris, 1956) p. 232; Gregory of Nyssa, *Hom. on the Cant.*, 5 . 6; Augustine, *De Trin.* XIV, 17, 23; XV, 8, 14; *Liturgy of the Hours*, 2nd Reading, Thursday of the 7th Week of Paschal Time, etc.
- (51) The formula "contemplative life" is mentioned in PC 7, although it was contested in the course of the elaboration of this decree. Some said this expression was "pagan in its origin, had a philosophical content, was incompatible with the demands of the Gospel. Everything 'contemplative' or 'monastic' seemed in the eyes of some to be suspect of Platonism, dualism, pessimism, and finally egoism"; in J. Leclercq, "Contemplative life and monasticism according to Vatican II", *Gregorianum*, 47, 1966, p. 498, with note 3.
- (52) J. Leclercq, *op. cit.*, Note 51, p. 505.
- (53) J.-R. Bouchet, "Partir au désert", disk 80004.

- (54) For a commentary on PC 7 on solitude and silence, cf. J. Leclercq, *op. cit.*, note 51, pp. 501-502.
- (55) A. Duval, conference on LCM Distinction I, Section I, Chapter 4, Lourdes.
- (56) A.-J. Festugière, *Les Moines d'Orient*, v. I, *Culture ou sainteté* (Cerf: Paris, 1961), pp. 75-91.
- (57) Augustine, *Tract. in Io. Ev.* 21, 1; J.-R. Bouchet, *Des hommes et des femmes nourris de la Parole*, disk 80002.
- (58) J.-R. Bouchet, "La prière", disk 80005.
- (59) J. Leclercq, *op. cit.*, note 51, p. 502.
- (60) St. Leo, *Sermons*, 40, 4.
- (61) J. Leclercq, *op. cit.*, Note 51, pp. 502-503.
- (62) M.-H. Vicaire, *Dominique et ses Prêcheurs* (Editions universitaires Fribourg Suisse, Editions du Cerf: Paris, 1977), pp.266-267; 271-273.
- (63) M.-H. Vicaire, *The Dominican Following of Christ*, Conference 3, Chalais, 1969.
- (64) Bl. Humbert of Romans, "*Expositio Regulæ Beati Augustini*", Ch. XVIII, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
- (65) Augustine, *C. Faust*, V, 9; *En. in Ps.* 132, 12; *Tract. in Io. Ev.* 39, 5.
- (66) Augustine, *Coll. c. Maximino*, 12; *Sermo.* 116, 6; 71, 35.
- (67) *Ibid.*, *En. in Ps.* 131, 4; 132, 13; *Sermo.* 103, s. 3, 4.
- (68) *Ibid.*, *De bono conj.*, 21.
- (69) M.-H. Vicaire, *La hantise de l'unanimité*, conference on St. Dominic, Lourdes.
- (70) Bl. Humbert of Romans, *op. cit.*, Note 64, pp. 71, 76, 77.
- (71) *necon arcana fecunditate apostolica dilatant (PC 7)*.
- (72) Cf. Augustine, *De bono conj.*, 18, 21; *De civ. Dei*, XIX, 17.
- (73) Cf. J. Leclercq, "La vie cachée", *op. cit.*, Note 18, pp. 279-296.
- (74) "... He is drawn to Christ, the man who finds his delight in the Truth ..., in Beatitude..., for all this is Christ!" (Augustine, *Tract. in Io. Ev.*, 26, 4.
- (75) *Ibid.*, *Sermo.* 179, 5. 6.
- (76) The explanation of our formula of profession given by Father Vicaire is enlightening: our formula of profession "comes from that of the Premonstratensians, which included, like that of most Canons, an offering to the patron of their sanctuary (the Blessed Virgin Mary). This Dominic did not want... He replaced it by a formula of obedience to God and to the Blessed Virgin (St. Dominic was added later)... The formula of profession of the Premonstratensians, like that of most religious of the time, then included an individualized promise of obedience to the superior of the community and his eventual successors. This promise goes back to the eleventh century, when the reform of diocesan Canons was effected by a promise of obedience to their bishop (in Rome, to the Pope). Profession engages us to obedience to superiors. It remains to individualize this superior; that is done by the promise which follows the profession. It is a mistake to say that in the Order we make only the vow of obedience. We make a vow to observe all that our law contains. The last promise, to the superior, is a remnant of the formalism of the Middle Ages, which did not esteem a person bound to another person except through a formal declaration. The essential words, therefore, are: I make profession according to the Rule and Constitutions of the Order" (Letter of May, 1968). It seems that this letter shows a change in the thought of Father Vicaire concerning the interpretation of the formula of profession of the Order. Cf. M.-H. Vicaire, *Histoire de Saint Dominique*, v. 2 (D.D.B. and Co.: Paris, 1957), pp. 47-48. For the formula of profession of the Premonstratensians, cf. M.-H. Vicaire, *Notes and critical studies of: Saint Dominique, l'idée, l'homme et l'oeuvre*, v. 2, of Father Mandonnet (D.D.B. and Co.: Paris, 1938), p. 226.
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- (78) Augustine, *De speculo*, preface, *Sermo.*, 49, 7.

SAINT DOMINIC AND WOMEN: A DIALOGUE WITH THE MODERN WORLD

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The challenge presented to every religious community at the close of Vatican II some thirty years ago was to delve into its own past to uncover there once again the sources of its own life-giving stream, to rekindle in themselves the light and fire of their founder's original inspiration *and* to translate that charism into the thought patterns and experience of the present.

There is a relationship between the two aspirations. We will have nothing to offer the world today unless we have first probed our own ideals. We must study St. Dominic, study his times and the circumstances in which our Order was brought to birth, steep ourselves in his founding grace. Thus imbued, we too can be preachers of truth in the midst of the Church for the world today.

Conversely, it is just as necessary for us to appreciate our own time with its joys and sorrows, hopes and doubts and anguish. Religious have typically entered into dynamic interaction with the mainstream of secular reality that has influenced and fashioned the progress of human history at any given point of time.¹ If enclosure separates us from the people of our time, it is that we may more effectively carry them in the compassion of our hearts. Dominic's cry, "What will become of sinners?" becomes more pressing when we ourselves experience their difficulties, when we ourselves grapple with the problems of discerning which values in our culture are open to the Gospel and which are alien to it. Again, it is the very attempt to understand the contemporary mindset, entering into dialogue with it, drawing forth the good and/or refuting the error as we bring our faith and love to bear upon it, that deepens our own relationship to God and our own vocation as Dominicans.

We are now in a period of major cultural transition. This essay is an attempt to relate the Women's Movement to the presence of women in the Dominican charism right from the beginning. St. Dominic himself enjoyed a special gift of friendship for women. The nuns were founded first, we say. What does this mean for us as followers of St. Dominic? What gift have we to offer, specifically as Dominicans, and specifically at this time when the Church and the world wrestle with weighty questions concerning women?

Part I: The Signs of Our Times

The Women's Movement:

Perhaps for some of us these words leave a bad taste in the mouth, as it were, as we conjure up visions of militant power struggles and/or women leaving the Church

in protest against patriarchy and an image of a "male God." These radical positions, however, while perhaps the best known, are not the only forms of feminism nor necessarily the most important. Other varieties, more conservative in scope, speak of partnership, of collaboration between men and women, indeed among nations and with nature itself. These more sober activists seek only to expose and correct the reality of exploitation and domination of the weak, the poor, and the marginalized that has been the lived experience of many, mostly women and children throughout recorded history.²

Concern for women's rights can be traced back to the Enlightenment.³ In the nineteenth century, awareness of women's need of equality with men crystallized in the movement to obtain women's suffrage.⁴ Originally, the women's rights movement was based on the insistence that women, as mothers, had a unique gift to offer the world. It was imperative, therefore, that women obtain the right to vote so that their special moral agency, based on the experience of motherhood, could begin to affect national and world situations.⁵ By the 1950's feminism had become self-reflective.⁶ Now it is a movement world wide in scope and touching every aspect of human life: political, economic, social, scientific, religious. The voice of the Church likewise, since the time of John XXIII, has joined the discussion: warning, reproving, encouraging and supporting; always guiding with her vision of faith toward the ultimate goal of human happiness in which are enshrined the equal dignity and reverence due to every man, woman and child without exception. All are called to share the banquet of God's kingdom; all together make up the Body of Christ.

The women's movement, I believe, is the central feature of a larger cultural shift of epochal proportion sweeping across the globe before our very eyes. The new age we are now in labor to bring forth amid much conflict and confusion may well be called "the age of woman." What this can mean we will not know until it comes to light. We can hope it will be a time of reintegration and wholeness, the promised era of peace.⁷ Already we are experiencing a new interest in relationships and communication, mystery and the unconscious, nurture and nature, the exact opposite of the mechanistic, static and objectivist world view with which many of us have grown up. What could this mean?

The Cycles of Life:

Human development is a complex, many-faceted program of change and growth accomplished by a rhythm of alternating movements or impulses now ordered in one direction, now in another. On an individual level, for example, one may note successive shifts from focus inward to expansion outward, from relationality to separation from others, then back again as in Erickson's stages from basic trust in the mother to separation from the mother and autonomy. Initiative, the next in Erickson's plan, is both an exercising of the child's newly discovered individual self and the formation of a new type of relationship with others as the child enters the play stage. As one further develops, according to Erickson, identity yields to intimacy, generativity to integrity.

Would this not correspond with Jung's concepts of the animus, the anima, the two basic polarities of every human personality, emerging at every stage of human development?

Other authors, such as Fowler, chart spiritual development along the lines of the mind's expanding powers of comprehension. Here too we note a similar movement outward toward individuation, then a doubling back inward toward participation and oneness.⁸ Again, the discerning eye may recognize alternation of the animus, the anima. Still others such as M. Scott Peck or Stephen Covey, interested in the dynamics of community building, discover progression from dependence — or pseudo-community — through independence and on to interdependence. In all of these instances, each stage marks a decided reversal of direction between relatedness to others or connectedness and autonomy or focus on the self and back again, each necessary to ensure ongoing development. If this is true individually, intellectually and socially, would similar trajectories not be expected of the human race as a whole?

Consciousness and Rationality:

Let us look at the factors that have predominated in the fashioning of the world as we have known it. Autonomy, individualism and objectivity have prevailed. There has been an intense struggle to subdue and control the elements together with an heroic impulse toward freedom, self-determination and achievement.⁹ All of these can be aligned to an outward expansive movement of growth. What would our world look like had the opposite energies of immanence, submission and obedience, or passive receptivity been the major force? Are there connections between the almost exclusively male perspectives that have shaped our world and the evolution of consciousness in the human race as a whole?

I realize I am walking on thin ice when I use the terms masculine or feminine to denote characteristics proper to both men and women but I ask your forbearance for the moment. Perhaps these traditional appellations are not unsupported by profound reality. If consciousness and light and reason and thinking and doing have been termed "masculine," it may be because they are all rooted in the direction of moving away from; just as the unconscious, shadow, the non-rational elements of human life and the emotions, the body, the earth and nature draw inward and have been named "feminine."

Consciousness in itself means awareness. As awareness becomes more focused, possibilities of choice emerge. Progressive separation into parts as each new choice is made is the stimulus that quickens fresh awareness. It is the work of reason to provide further distinctions and differentiations, and of logic to display the options in orderly fashion.

The history of humanity is, as Jung pointed out, a history of developing consciousness.¹⁰ Where are we now, then? As rationality has progressed, so also has

opposition between human and subhuman, between matter and spirit, between mind and body, between ideology and reality, between self and other. Today we have become aware of opposition between men and women and, at an even more basic level, between the conscious and the unconscious.¹¹ The challenge now is to return to wholeness, to incorporate values that have been repressed or undeveloped into a more holistic pattern of human life, to rediscover the richness of our own inner being and the joy of family and friends, to want collaboration more than competition, solidarity more than singularity, to dissolve the differences that divide us. This is the deepest meaning of the women's movement. Womanhood (the anima in Jung) stands for connectedness, wholeness; manhood (the animus) for distinctiveness, individualism.

The Matrix of the Unconscious:

The proliferating and expansive thrust outward which is characteristic of development cannot be primary. There must first be an undifferentiated whole that is capable of a process of change by being broken apart. In fact, that is exactly what takes place when, biologically for example, the female egg is fertilized by the male sperm. Life begins when the female whole is activated by male separation-into-parts. All growth is characterized by a series of progressively finer divisions but ongoing distinction cannot be an end in itself. Rather, growth achieves its purpose by coming to rest in the source whence it came and where the process begins anew, sometimes — as in evolution to higher forms of life — spiraling upwards at more and more mature levels.

We may observe in the physical universe as well as biologically and psychologically, even spiritually and mystically, collectively as well as individually, the same movement outward followed by the return; there are centrifugal forces balancing centripetal forces; there is exitus, then reditus; ebb and flow.

These homely examples are offered as an aid to deciphering the signs of our times. The Western world is in crisis as it pauses and adjusts to new values and insights that are reversing the old established order. Women, no longer content to remain in the background, are making their presence felt, and men, long in control, are learning to make room for them.

We are grateful for the scientific advances and technological achievements that our men have wrought. But they have not resolved deeper questions like world-wide discrepancy between rich and poor; nor stemmed the tide of aggression, violence, greed and exploitation. Progress has left us a legacy of emptiness and meaninglessness. Where, then, shall we turn?

Jung has described the present state of affairs as "modern man in search of a soul." He further advises that, in the second half of life one must come to terms with the inner world, just as one had to do with the outer world in the first half of life.¹² Collectively and individually, we must return to center, to the perceptions of our inner

self, where we will come into contact with the wellsprings of life and energy. Differentiation of opposites, or the making of choices, characterizes the first half of life; unification or reintegration is the task of the second half of life.¹³

All the great spiritual masters tell us that God is to be found nowhere if not in the very depths of our own soul where He is more present to us than we are to ourselves. Modern psychology reiterates the same truth: we must reconnect with the center of meaning, our own unconscious. It is here, from within our own hearts, that reconciliation with God takes place and that the door to reconciliation with one another and with nature is opened.¹⁴ When one grapples with one's self and one's own inconsistencies, the projected image of them onto the external world evaporates. May we say that the revolt of women in recent decades is symbolic — even symptomatic — of the urgency of the repressed unconscious clamoring to be set free and integrated into conscious life?

The Image of Our Maker:

Thus far, I have attempted to situate the women's movement within a pattern of growth and development on a cosmic scale similar to that which each of us experiences in the course of one's lifetime. That men have led the way has perhaps been inevitable, given the nature of development and its link with the male generative process but we must not stop there nor condone the imbalanced, one-sidedness of the present situation. We must complete the task of bringing ourselves and all of humanity to its full potential.

There is no need to oppose men and women. Modern psychology offers us the insight that the human psyche is androgynous, ie., possessing both masculine and feminine characteristics. We may reinterpret the Genesis account of creation, therefore, to mean that each of us, men and women alike, contain within ourselves the complete image of God. To become whole and God-like (the two are synonymous) we must undertake the difficult task of coming to terms with our own inner shadow, that portion of ourselves that yet remains repressed and undeveloped. Men must look within to discover their own womanly qualities and bring them to maturity. Women must release their masculine potential. All of us must claim our full personhood.

If there are deep wounds dividing the world, they are the sum total of our individual broken selves, our split personalities. How may we, as Dominicans, bring healing? What gift has been given us to share?

Part II: In the Footsteps of Saint Dominic

Let us recollect the fragments of our thoughts and paint them anew in the colors of our Dominican heritage. We have noted the imbalance of the Western world and the rising power of women. We have traced the imbalance to an intellectual - scientific -

technical development that has somehow become severed from its recentring influence. We have hinted that the masculine psychic principle is always in the forefront of progress. We have suggested that the particular giftedness of the feminine psychic principle of connectedness and wholeness will provide the key to a restored humanity. Finally, we have placed the responsibility for renewal in the hands of each of us to look within, there to reconcile the differences that divide ourselves and all creation.

I believe that we have a model for a transfigured world in St. Dominic and in the family that bears his name. St. Dominic exemplifies the image of God come to the full perfection of both its masculine and feminine qualities. In the Order we enjoy a full choir of men and women of every walk in life praising God with one voice and announcing salvation for all. Our rhythm of preaching turns within to speak with God even as it turns without to speak about God.

Saint Dominic:

A portrait of St. Dominic displays a remarkable combination of traits¹⁵ of which no side is in shadow, no side is repressed or undeveloped. He was both active and contemplative; zealous and compassionate; a dedicated preacher and an affable, cheerful companion.¹⁶ All the witnesses of St. Dominic's life attest the extraordinary force of his personality and the dynamism of his authority.¹⁷ Yet, proofs of his humility and detachment from self are equally abundant.¹⁸ Intense, energetic, enthusiastic in bearing,¹⁹ he preferred to evoke responses and arouse initiative in others, while he himself only prepared the way.²⁰ Offered the bishopric, he turned aside from its prestige and trappings of power and authority that he might preach the gospel in a style of simplicity, wearing no shoes and begging for his bread. As founder — a title he did not seek — he did not impose his views on the brethren; he left no rule of his own devising to guide and inspire.²¹ Instead, he inaugurated a system of government by which the original ideal of the Holy Preaching could be continued and developed by the living voice of his followers gathered in chapter. Without excluding the centralizing, unifying element of a hierarchical principle, St. Dominic vested the primary source of authority in the community itself and in their communal vision.

In each of these familiar scenes, St. Dominic's gentleness is as prominent as his strength, his simplicity parallels his wisdom and prudence, his glance inward — within himself, in prayer; amid his associates, in government — is as vital and important as his thrust outward in the apostolate. St. Dominic mirrors God to us because he was able to bring both sides of his personality to such a high degree of development and effectiveness. We see his womanly qualities as he prayed with his body, in his personal love for Christ, in his expansive joy and deep feelings of compassion for others, and in his total self giving for souls. St. Dominic's style of government was all inclusive, his role as leader relational rather than authoritarian. On the other hand, St. Dominic was no sissy. He was strongly masculine, possessing a cool head for business. He was discerning and decisive and knew how to exact obedience as well

as to obey. He had a firm sense of principle, was intellectually oriented and valiantly defended the faith against whole armies of vice and error. Each of these features is reflected in the Order which again bears the complete image of God in the men and women who together espouse its ideals.

Prouille:

St. Dominic, it is said, had a special gift for ministry to women. He himself admitted that he particularly enjoyed the company of younger women. It is not surprising therefore that nine women were among his first converts; nor that he took time from his busy schedule of preaching to secure housing for them. What is cause for amazement is that this tiny seed was destined to become the grace of the Order of Preachers. First beginnings are important for they contain in germ the full blown plant. Let us look closer.

There is first the relationship between St. Dominic and the women, mutually supportive and life-giving. He instructed, guided and cared for them.²² These women were already leading exemplary lives but their understanding was darkened by the false thinking of heretical doctrine. St. Dominic's teachings opened unknown vistas of the faith to them. They in turn were a source of inspiration to him.²³ The goodness of their lives, the intensity of their devotion, the utter openness of their hearts to receive the grace of the Word gladdened and strengthened him in his often discouraging labors.

Then there was the location of the first convent. Prouille was at the crossroads of the four major cities of Southern France — from Limoux to Castelnaudary and from Foix to Carcassonne, each famous for its heresies.²⁴ Here, at the very center of one of the most active strongholds of Catharism,²⁵ St. Dominic placed a house of prayer for women. There was as yet no thought of an "Order"; there was only the inspiration to associate these women with his preaching by their prayer and penance.²⁶

As more followers joined St. Dominic in his apostolate, St. Mary of Prouille became a double convent, a place where the brethren could return after their long and tiring journeys for rest and prayer, to regather their strength in companionship and study, to become centered and replenished once again, refreshed and readied for the next round of activity. These early years of the Order's gestation established the rhythm of the Holy Preaching: prayer and the apostolate, contemplation and action, so intertwined and inseparable as to become the Dominican identity.

By 1215 St. Dominic and the brethren no longer stayed with the nuns but as the Order expanded he always tried to arrange a convent of the friars near the houses of women so as to form a true family²⁷ continuing the same mutual aid and support to insure the grace of preaching. This warm relationship has remained to this day and there are several well known instances of friendship.

The nuns and the friars together are an image of the Order. We, the nuns, occupy the place traditionally associated with women — hidden, with no outwardly active works to show — at the heart of the Holy Preaching, ceaselessly pulsating the life blood of contemplation to every cell of the apostolate. The role of the nuns is essential; it cannot be displaced. But neither does it exhaust the all but limitless possibilities for women to participate in the mission of the Order. We have only to think of Catherine of Siena, Rose of Lima, Margaret of Castello, Jane of Aza, Imelda Lambertini, to mention but a few. These women and others, equally with the men, share the grace of preaching.

The Holy Preaching:

But what is the grace of preaching? What, at essence, is the Dominican vocation in which the men and women of the Order equally partake? The nuns are at the heart of the Holy Preaching. They point to it; they manifest its presence; they symbolize its grace; they ensure its continued existence. The nuns are at the heart but they do not themselves constitute the heart. The heart of the Holy Preaching is friendship with Jesus Christ, union with and transformation into God, revealing itself in the holiness of its members.

To further explore this aspect of the Dominican charism we must look to the historical circumstances of our founding. Like our own, the thirteenth century was a time of cultural transition. Spiritually, the riches and cares of this world had, over time, choked the Word, emptying it of its essential meaning. The clergy and monastics who had professed to "leave the world" had, in fact, become enmeshed in it, leaving the simple laity confused and disheartened. There was need to return to the sources of Christianity, to re-immense the Church in the life-giving waters of conversion and a deepened understanding of the mysteries of salvation. St. Dominic took up the challenge by harking back to the early Church. He had already long imitated the Apostles in the cenacle as a canon regular, with his long hours of contemplative prayer and the official liturgy of the Church, with his affinity for community and the holding of all things in common.²⁸ Now his love for Christ fired a new course of action, compelling him out into the highways and byways of the world, in search of his fellow men and women lost in the darkness of error and hungering for knowledge of the faith.

St. Dominic was a key figure in the religious revival of the thirteenth century. It was he who found the way to reunite both aspects of the apostolic calling: he and his followers were to be *both* models of the flock, united among themselves, given to prayer, poor in spirit and in fact; *and* they were to be on the road, tirelessly proclaiming the good news to every creature. The two facets are not easily fused,²⁹ yet for St. Dominic there could be no discrepancy between the two. One arose from within the other, each grounding and bringing the other to a perfection neither could enjoy alone.

The same story could be retold in terms of faith and reason or nature and grace. The thirteenth century was in ferment intellectually as well. New philosophical tools of

methodology were coming into vogue. Urban universities with their analytic procedures were replacing the older, unsophisticated monastic schools as centers of learning. The old order was proving inadequate. There was need to incorporate the new intellectual insights into one's understanding of the faith. Here again, St. Dominic struck a clear balance. For him, there could be no contradiction between human learning and faith or between supernatural grace and human effort. Both are necessary; both are total gift, the human element paralleling the divine. Thus, without abandoning the monastic ideal of personal holiness or his chief study in the book of charity, Christ Crucified, St. Dominic simultaneously embraced the effort and discipline of intellectual thought in service of the faith.

Reconciliation:

This harmonious balance of the diverse elements of graced human life is among the most precious of our Dominican heritage and, I believe, meant to be shared. Ours is a mixed life of mutual enrichment and reciprocity, whether among the men and women of the Order, or between study and contemplation, or between contemplation and preaching. We are challenged to maintain this essential balance or to refigure it into ever new and resplendent patterns and designs, according to changing times and circumstances. The life rhythm of the nuns is the reverse of that of the friars; both are different again from the active sisterhoods or the wide spectrum found among the laity; our way of life today is no match for that of yesteryear. The nuns, for example, have claimed doctrinal study and responsibility for their own government as theirs by right, both of which were unknown to women at the time of our founding.

LCM (2:11), as well as LCO, describes the Dominican vocation as a living example of the reconciliation of all things in Christ. Unity, unanimity, community are all the very air we breathe. As followers of St. Dominic we are called, individually and communally, each in our own unique way, to embrace both sides of reality, every member of our community, our joys and our sorrows, our weaknesses and sins as well as our gifts. This is not an easy task. Yet we need be afraid only of the heresy of imbalance, a dualistic mentality that pits one value against another. Oneness of mind and heart is the great sign of God's abiding presence. May it be our contribution to help heal our fragmented world.

Part III: Conclusion

Most of the influence that women have exerted throughout history has been of a quiet and unassuming nature. (Let us not underestimate its power!) Even so, against this general backdrop of obscurity there have been some women — one here, another there — who have carried the torch alongside or in place of their men. Today we are witnessing whole multitudes of women on the march for a better, more just and peaceful world. Before we draw our last threads connecting the women's movement to the

tapestry of our Dominican charism, let us pick up the stitches we still need from the Biblical accounts.

At creation, woman is seen as the perfecting element; Adam is brought to the full development of his personhood when he recognizes Eve as identical with yet different from himself.³⁰ "Male and female He created *them* [plural]. In the image of God He created *him/her* [singular]." This is the first society, that communion of persons that defines human as a being-in-relation-with-others.

Paging ahead to the New Testament, we find Mary as the new Eve, intimately associated with her Son in the redemptive mysteries. She it is from whom comes forth the Sun of Justice and around whom the disciples are gathered in expectation of the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost.

Returning to the Old Testament, we see that the presence of women is recorded at each significant stage of development of the covenant. This would seem to indicate that women are perceived as channels of life, instrumental in their own unique way for salvation. This theme also comes to full flower in Mary, Virgin of the New Covenant.

Next we note the gradual unfolding of God's self-revelation as compassionate, slow to anger, rich in mercy, full of kindness toward the weak, the poor, the lowly, the dispossessed. These divine attributes culminate in Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, the very incarnation of mercy. They are also the imagery used by Our Lady at Guadalupe: "Do not be frightened or disturbed by illness or any other calamity. Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not your mother?"

Then we mark Israel's increasing awareness of herself as chosen and loved by God precisely because of her lowly condition: "the smallest among all the nations." Closely allied to this is the movement from external structure and the Law toward internalization of its meaning: "What I want is love, not sacrifice." The new covenant is to be written on our hearts, in our consciences. In a recent address Pope John Paul referred to Mary as the memory of the Church.³¹

We have already located all of these themes in the Dominican way of life. Are they not re-echoed in the women's movement, at least in its deepest, richest and most Christian form: respect for life and the equal dignity of all, a culture of non-violence, justice and peace, a new society characterized by mutuality and care for the weakest and poorest?

Reversing the picture, do we not see that the criticisms leveled against the wealthy and powerful expose violations of the Gospel: domination and exploitation, self-aggrandizement and greed at the expense of the less fortunate who are manipulated for pleasure or convenience? And is not the same Jesus who reveals God as mercy also identified with the powerless? As the Suffering Servant, the Man of Sorrows, He Himself is the victim of every atrocity which women and others of lowly

estate have endured at the hands of their fellows from the beginning of time to its end: despised and humiliated, beaten, abused, condemned, and killed with no means of defense, no recourse but to call upon God.

While Mary herself did not bear the cross for us, she did stand beneath it, an act often more painful than to take on oneself the sufferings of the loved one. However, neither has Mary been content to simply compassionate Jesus in her heart. She too in recent times, throughout a long series of apparitions, has taken up the torch and marches at the head of every other woman – and man – who decries the sins of the modern world.

What then shall we conclude? What is the point of contact between the women's movement and the family of St. Dominic? What gift have we to offer at the table of the world's greatest hunger, the world's greatest pain?

I believe that the key to our answer lies in the mystery of woman at the heart of God's plan for salvation, not yet fully understood perhaps, still in process of coming to light; yet given to St. Dominic as in anticipation, a kind of prophecy in action, or a harbinger of the lived Gospel come to its full perfection.

I believe that St. Dominic, by placing women at the very center of his preaching apostolate, encapsulates in a single instant the entire Christian message. The unity in diversity of our men and women joining forces in the service of truth is an image of the Triune God. The integration of reason with faith, contemplation with action, holiness with preaching mirrors the mystery of the Word made flesh. Past and future salvation history are crystallized in the present moment. We could say, then, that the Order of Preachers is a microcosm of creation, a model of the Church come to maturity, an icon of redeemed humanity.

The gift can only follow. What we have been given, we must give. Stored grain rots. The treasure must be shared. I leave it to each entity, to each member, of our Dominican family to discover which facet of this precious jewel he or she will most splendidly portray.

An early hymn refers to St. Dominic as the evening star: "when this world's night began to fall, a new-found star began to rise." The world has indeed gone through a long period of very great darkness, many centuries of increased unrest and doubt and anguish. That darkness remains with us still although already the first streaks of dawn appear. St. Dominic is the evening star, a beacon of hope throughout the present travail. Now, however, the night is almost past. The star of evening has become the morning star and as the dawn approaches we turn our gaze to Mary, the Woman par excellence.

Let us join our prayer to hers that soon the Sun of Justice may arise, dispelling our offenses like a cloud, our sins like a mist. Holy Father Dominic, grace-filled Preacher, pray for your sons and daughters, pray.

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24. Pierre Mandonnet, O.P., *St. Dominic and His Work*, tr. Sr. Mary Benedicta Larkin, O.P. (St Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1945), 366.
25. Mandonnet, 366.
26. LCM 1, I.
27. Bedouelle, 207.
28. M.-H. Vicaire, O.P., *The Genius of St. Dominic*, 9 ff., 92 ff., and other. Cf. also Acts 2, 2.
29. M.-H. Vicaire, *The Apostolic Life*, tr. William E. DeNaple (Chicago: Priory Press, 1966), 107.
30. George H. Tavard, *Woman in Christian Tradition* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1973), 7-8. Cf. as well: John Paul II, *The Theology of Marriage and Celibacy: Catechesis in Light of the Resurrection of the Body* (Boston, Mass: St. Paul Editions, 1986).
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MID-LIFE NOVITIATE: MY "OCCASION FOR PROFOUND HUMAN GROWTH"

Sister Marina O.P.
Summit, N J

[Two spiritual mentors who have aided this personal evolution
are Doctor Tom Dooley and Blessed Edith Stein.]

On the eve of the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes and the World Day of the Sick, February 11, 1997 this uprooted, transplanted 44-year-old divorced woman whose first career spanned some twenty-plus years as a professional registered nurse, prepared to become a clothed daughter of St. Dominic the following morning. First, I was thanking Almighty God for his patient and repetitive call since the days of my youth. Mine is not a "delayed vocation" but a much-detoured path taken in effort to respond to God's call. Secondly, I reflected upon my rocky postulancy and knew that I was still unsure of my footing. Desperately needing hind's feet on this high place in the hills of Summit, New Jersey, I proceeded cautiously. My heart was singing, long have I waited for this coming home and my mind was anticipating the demands this novitiate would make. Despite my voiced doubts the Lord continued to beckon to me. Mid-life novitiate would be my time of testing the life and testing myself.

As an independent career woman and survivor of an empty and fruitless marriage, I had mistakenly permitted "my work" to become my all. Only through this role of nurse, had I been consistently able to happily channel my feminine energies and feel almost completely fulfilled as nurturer. When mid-life approached, the realization that I was spiritually unfulfilled impacted with an instinct-like sense that time was not on my side. A deja-vu experience from deep within my soul demanded my attention.

Remember! Remember the days of my youth when I had pined for religious life as a contemplative! Yes, I recalled and regretfully admitted to myself that my journey thus far had been filled with two decades of an overactive work focus. My home life had become one of enjoyable solitude that permitted my contemplative nature to read, study, pray, and meditate. Was it too late for this enduring nature to be given its proper place in my life? The Kennedy years dared us to dream dreams that never were and say, why not? What was God saying? Perhaps He was responding with familiar words directed to others as well. Say not that you are too old, too established, too settled, too anxious, too career-oriented or even that you are a divorced woman. Say not any of these things. Simply, trust me and give to me your unconditional fiat.

My annulment was finalized and I was declared a "free woman" who dared to walk upon the waters. I must fix my gaze upon Christ and not let my numerous doubts and fears cause me to sink. And so my novitiate began as a Dominican contemplative cloistered nun known in religious life as Sister Marina of the Heart of Jesus. Amongst the many

mementoes of the clothing day was a prayer-card which especially embraced me. It stated, "A life spent in union with God can neither be lonely nor loveless. The unquenchable source of formation for the feminine heart is the Divine Heart which alone is able to lead each woman to her perfect fulfillment as woman."¹ These are the words of Edith Stein. How directly she spoke to me as if she knew just how unfulfilled I felt as a woman. She also shared my conclusion that it was now the Heart of Jesus who would complete me. Since novitiate studies were now my priority, I had to place my intrigue with Edith temporarily on hold and digest my first of many frustrations as novice.

WOMAN OF IRRESOLUTION

As is the community custom on Pentecost, I randomly selected another prayer card prepared by our prioress with the gifts of the Holy Spirit. "Understanding and joy" were to be mine! No doubt I was lacking in both. The loss of my former role as nurse was literally tormenting me. No longer was I independent. I who had been a mid-line manager now had nothing to say about anything. No longer was I able to channel my feminine energies. My days were filled with distractions and preoccupations as I went through the motions of repetitive domestic chores; by none of which have I ever felt fulfilled. I ached to do what I knew to be "work" and I was missing real people. My entire being was immersed in pure culture shock. I was in exile!

This monastic life no longer held its initial attraction. The peace that I sought could not be found here, not even temporarily. My jovial self no longer existed and I was angry. A major depression had hold of me. Prior to entrance I had "let go" of all the external attachments. The yet- needed surrendering of my internal self, my identity as nurse, was the seemingly impossible attachment to relinquish. Clearly and simply I was not yet understanding the life nor was I understanding myself. Emotionally, I was "stuck" and remained in this limbo of indecision to go or to stay. I made a formal declaration to my Novice Mistress, Sister Cynthia Mary, that I was a woman of irresolution! Once I officially named my status, I sought professional counseling and begged God for the gift of sending me for the first time in my life my own spiritual director.

REVISITED BY DR. TOM DOOLEY

In May of 1997 during our community's annual retreat the Spirit guided me to a selection from our Professed Library entitled *No Strangers to Violence, No Strangers to Love* by Boniface Hanley, OFM. This was Hanley's

...second volume of stories about Christian heroes whose stories are scarcely known. Several common threads run through their lives. All were victims of violence that plagued the 20th century; all demonstrated the power of God's love in the face of evil; and all lived the message of Calvary — that is the bitter reality of their suffering was their occasion for profound human growth.²

Turning to the first chapter I became reunited with the long-lost hero of my youth, Dr. Tom Dooley! His writings had so influenced me that at age eighteen I pursued a nursing career and for a while considered joining the Medical Mission Sisters. It was Dr. Tom's prayer I chose to be placed beneath my nursing school yearbook picture. It reads, "Give us, Thy worthy children, The blessings of wisdom and speech, And the hands and hearts of healing, And the lips and tongues that teach."³

Hanley reveals "When prompted by the American ambassador to move his clinic in Laos to a less dangerous area, Dr. Tom, obviously upset by such a prompting, wrote home:

I am a doctor. This is the root of me — I am a doctor. Everything else, everyone, is second to that. First, I am a doctor. All my duties are entwined with that, and they are clear and lucid. Everything else is secondary. Home life, social life, writing life, loving life, family, friends, romance, fame, fortune, all these are secondary because I am a doctor.⁴

Finally, someone else knew my present suffering, my bitter reality. His entire statement I could parrot simply by replacing the role of doctor with the role of nurse and of course, eliminate fame and fortune. My prior knowledge of Dr. Tom had been limited to his own writings. Here, Hanley portrays hidden facts about him. Many of these increased my fondness for the man, for we shared even more common threads. He played the piano, danced a mean jitterbug, engaged people easily and yet was intensely private and was described as a lonely soul. He, too, had a great devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes.

When told of his having cancer in August of 1959 his immediate response was, "Oh, I thought you were going to tell me something was wrong with my work or that Medico was in trouble or something like that."⁵ Without nursing in my life I felt my being, my essence, had died. I could almost hear Dr. Tom whispering, There's more to life than work and career. Sure, it hurts but there was a part of me that I never let live. Don't make that same mistake. Don't become a lonely soul; let people in, let people get close.

EDITH STEIN BECOMES SPIRITUAL MENTOR

Hanley's second chapter reintroduced me to Edith Stein whose acquaintance I had the privilege of making all too briefly at the time of my clothing. I did know she was a woman who dared to pursue truth and perfect fulfillment. Where my old friend Dr. Tom was leaving off, my new acquaintance and soon-to-be mentor was literally picking me up. My intrigue with Edith would now be satisfied.

Edith was born October 12, 1891 on the Jewish Day of Atonement into a devout Jewish family. During her youth she lost her faith and became an agnostic. Pursuing truth relentlessly she studied phenomenology as a disciple of Edmund Husserl and went on to become a philosopher in her own right. Hanley's brief profile only added to my intrigue and it was not enough. Needing to know more about this accomplished, fulfilled woman who was a contemplative by nature, I revisited the professed library and next selected her autobiography, *Life In A Jewish Family*. Therein, I was naturally drawn to

our first common thread, specifically, her brief nursing service rendered during World War I.

She had volunteered with the Red Cross. After completing a four-week nurse's aide course which was supplemented by a six-week clinical experience, she received her needed immunizations for typhoid and cholera. Being quite determined, she opted to ignore the negative feedback generously given by her own mother and friends, such as "You will be overrun with lice" or that she was placing herself in "mortal danger" and finally "The nurses had a bad reputation!"⁶

Upon arrival for duty, she was assigned to work at a lazaretto. This had been a former military academy which could accommodate 4,000 beds for those soldiers with contagious diseases. She and the other Red Cross aides were supervised by the professional German nurses. The many soldiers treated "were Germans, Czechs, Slovaks, Slovenes, Poles, Ruthenians, Hungarians, Rumanians, Italians plus Gypsies, Russians and Turks."⁷ Edith soon learned fragments of various languages and incorporated her own international sign language. The physicians conversed with her in Latin which she describes as the "barbaric kind of Latin produced when the medical men murdered their language."⁸

Sister Stein described herself as "friendly with all the nurses yet maintained an appropriate distance from them; felt much alone."⁹ Like the soldiers and the nurses she, too, became accustomed to strong coffee and cigarettes. "Apparently one's nerves craved some kind of stimulation when one left the wards,"¹⁰ explained Edith. After being on the scene only two weeks she was responsible for sixty typhoid patients. Once she had demonstrated her mastering of proper injection technique she was transferred to night duty 7 P.M. to 7 A.M. Besides the responsibility of her own unit, she was endorsed to render "attention" to two additional wards because the one on duty in the first knew nothing of injections, and there was only one attendant on duty in the other. An isolation room was also to be her responsibility where a fellow with diphtheria was being treated. While juggling all of these assignments she also managed to maintain the ward books in "faultless order."¹¹

After three months, Edith was entitled to a fifteen-day furlough which she declined. Having mastered sterile technique, she was progressed to assisting in the small operating room where the surgeons changed bandages. Here she was known by the doctors as "Sister Edith, Philosopher by profession."¹² An orienting physician was curious to know, "Who was the tireless nurse at the instrument table?"¹³ Commenting on her own care of a very difficult soldier who suffered greatly she wrote, "This man of sorrows found my care a blessing."¹⁴ She remained another three months after which she returned home to resume prior work and studies. Edith Stein became the recipient of her country's Medal of Valor for her outstanding nursing service.

EDITH'S DREAM FULFILLED

Pursuing truth relentlessly Edith read the autobiography of Teresa of Avila in one night and concluded, "This is the truth."¹⁵ On January 1, 1922 she was baptized into the Catholic Church taking the name of Teresa. Desiring to become a cloistered Carmelite, she voiced her hope to her spiritual director who advised her to delay. He prompted her to consider her already heartbroken and grieved Jewish mother and meanwhile to make use of her teaching talents. For the next eight years Teresa was content to conduct teacher-training at a Dominican convent school where she resided and refused salary. It was during this time that she took private vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

On October 14, 1933 at the age of forty-two Teresa entered the Discalced Carmelite convent in Cologne. Here was another independent professional woman who had known a great sense of fulfillment via her varied roles as philosopher, prolific writer, lecturer, teacher and nurse. Despite all that she had thus far accomplished she too, a contemplative by nature, recognized her own incompleteness as a woman. Just as she had encouraged all other women to recognize within themselves their own feminine uniqueness and to persevere in their on-going journey towards wholeness and completeness, she now in the mid-life of her years, left her "all" hoping to find more of herself than ever before. We shared a second common thread.

Hanley comments that Teresa's "fellow postulants had little idea of who she was in the world and neither they nor she cared very much about the past. The only clue she gave of her former professional status was her inexperience in housework."¹⁶ On April 15, 1934 Teresa was clothed in her Carmelite religious habit taking the name of Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross. Hanley states, "By her formal entrance into the novitiate, she took a significant step toward realizing the purpose of her life — to suffer with Jesus for her people so that they might be saved and rise to new life."¹⁷ Describing her own joy Sister Teresa Benedicta wrote, "If something is given to you for which you have prayed a long time, this fulfillment is then almost more overwhelming than an instant granting."¹⁸ She was of course, referring to her long years of waiting to enter Carmel.

In April of 1935 Sister Teresa Benedicta of the Cross pronounced her first profession of vows. Hanley relates that "Her calm and serenity deepened."¹⁹ He goes on to quote a friend named Hedwig Conrad-Martuis' recollection of his visit with her after profession.

The hour of our meeting stands clearly before me. Edith always had something childlike and friendly about her. But the feeling of being sheltered and the inner bliss which she had reached were, if I may say so, enchanting. Edith told me during this meeting that she had some difficulties during her first year of novitiate, but she had overcome them and how much she had won!²⁰

A MIRACLE CALLED RESOLVE!

Such an inner bliss was not yet mine. Despite my long-delayed dream seemingly being fulfilled, I was completing my first year of novitiate and recognizing that my ambivalence persisted strong as ever. I needed a miracle called resolve! My only certainty was that Edith Stein would be my mentor and guide to such conversion.

On the night of December 8th, I had a most disturbing and distressing dream. I found myself living in a prison cell dressed in civilian clothing and aware that I had the freedom to come and go as if living in an apartment building of prison cells. While I tried to sleep within this dream I could hear the howling of a tortured animal in the neighboring cell. I realized the creature was being set ablaze and extinguished repeatedly. I had to respond, to rescue, and sought the help of a professional vet; but I was unsuccessful and helpless for I couldn't personally gain access to the cell. Even my prayers on the animal's behalf seemed ineffective.

A few days later on my monthly retreat day I continued to indulge in my readings of Edith Stein and I read the following excerpt from "Hail Cross, Our Only Hope" in which she addresses her Carmelite sisters as their renewal of vows approaches.

The world is in flames. Are you impelled to put them out? Look at the cross. From the open heart gushes the blood of the Savior. This extinguishes the flames of hell. Make your heart free by the faithful fulfillment of your vows; then the flood of divine love will be poured into your heart until it overflows and becomes fruitful to all the ends of the earth. Do you hear the groans of the wounded on the battlefields in the west and the east? You are not a physician and not a nurse and cannot bind up the wounds. You are enclosed in a cell and cannot get to them. Do you hear the anguish of the dying? You would like to be a priest and comfort them. Does the lament of the widows and orphans distress you? You would like to be an angel of mercy and help them. Look at the Crucified. If you are nuptially bound to him by the faithful observance of your holy vows, your being is precious blood. Bound to him, you are omnipresent as he is. You cannot help here or there like the physician, the nurse, the priest. You can be at all fronts, wherever there is grief, in the power of the cross. Your compassionate love takes you everywhere, this love from the divine heart. Its precious blood is poured everywhere — soothing, healing, saving.

The eyes of the Crucified look down on you asking, probing. Will you make your covenant with the Crucified anew in all seriousness? What will you answer him? Lord, where shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.²¹

This extraordinarily blessed woman gave to me my promised gift of understanding. Now I understand what it means to become the spouse of Christ as never before. With this enlightenment came a greater appreciation of the contemplative life. Blessed Teresa Benedicta of the Cross gave to me my much-needed miracle called resolve. No longer must I be the one to rescue in person, no longer must I be limited by the role of nurse, the angel of mercy. Now I must free myself to become even more, mysteriously more. Edith warned, "The woman involved in professional life has to face the danger of overspecialization, which is also true of the man: she may become developed in one particular way at the expense of her formation as a full human being. All this can be

prevented by an intimate relationship to God."²² Peace began to flow within my entire being! Finally, I was at home with myself and within the monastery. Days and weeks began to pass uneventfully!

In January, 1998, some physical changes were also demanding my attention. What else could possibly happen during this time of novitiate? It was official, I was in "the changes". Of course, I was not ready for this. Some of the girl-talk amongst the sisters in story-telling was quite entertaining and laughable. At times however, I felt saddened by the finality that, officially, motherhood would never come to pass. Then came our Master General Father Timothy Radcliffe's timely letter regarding "The Affective Life" and I was quite relieved to hear his personal viewpoint along the same lines from a masculine perspective.

By March I realized more than "the changes" were happening within me. A mass on my left breast appeared. A suspicious routine mammogram and ultrasound back in December dictated that I return and repeat both of these in April. Three biopsies done in December were all benign and so I was not initially alarmed. However, I knew this recent growth was not a cyst and we couldn't wait until April. Surgical biopsy via needle location was done and a diagnosis of breast cancer confirmed. Monday, May 11th, a modified radical mastectomy was done as there were no other options for me. My entire left breast was "filled with cancer." My immediate concern was having to tell my 77-year-old mother who had also been diagnosed with breast cancer four years ago and had undergone the same operation. She comes from a family long experienced with the sufferings of cancer. She is the survivor of the four of her six siblings who were diagnosed with cancer; she is my model of hope.

How shocking it was, and still is, to be the patient! Despite the cancer, the surgery, the chemo and the physical therapy, I am very much aware that the longed-for peace which I came here to find is now mine and not even cancer can take this from me. Yet, another common thread I see with Dr. Tom. He wrote of his life with cancer, "...the jagged ugly cancer scar goes no deeper than my flesh. There is no cancer in my spirit. The Lord saw to that."²³ With these gifts of understanding and peace, I look to the day of my vows knowing the gift of joy will be mine as never before, for I am now a woman of resolve and I have chosen the better part. My mid-life novitiate has been my personal "occasion for profound human growth" and like Blessed Teresa Benedicta of the Cross I have won much!

During the preparation of this article I developed a longing for another prayer card in my life; specifically, one of Blessed Teresa Benedicta of the Cross, who suffered martyrdom in the gas chamber at Auschwitz on August 9, 1942, and will be canonized on October 11, 1998. Though I expressed this need to many who might come across such a card, no one had yet returned with one. Then suddenly my prioress, Sister Mary Martin, brought me the desired treasure; it had been hidden right here in this house. Edith's message on the card I will also share with you, confident that you, the reader, as well as I need to feel less troubled about permitting ourselves to rest, "really rest."

God is there in these moments of rest and can give us in a single instant exactly what we need. Then the rest of the day can take its course, under the same effort and strain, perhaps, but in peace. And when night comes, and you look back over the day and see how fragmentary everything has been, and how much you planned that has gone undone, and all the reasons you have to be embarrassed and ashamed just take everything exactly as it is, put it in God's hands and leave it with him. Then you will be able to rest in him — really rest — and start the next day as a new life.²⁴

As for myself I am resting in the arms of Christ as well as the arms of my dear sisters in community and feel strongly the love, prayers and healing rays from all of you who are loving me from a distance. As a greeting card from a volunteer from the Reach for Recovery program stated so simply, "Life is already sweeter than ever before." Like the suffering soldier, who found Sister Edith's care such a blessing, I too find all of your care such a blessing! I give you my thanks.

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NOTES

1. Freda Mary Oben, PhD, *Edith Stein, Scholar-Feminist-Saint* (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1988), p. 44.
2. Boniface Hanley, OFM, *No Strangers to Violence, No Strangers to Love* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 1983), Back Cover.
3. Dr. Tom Dooley, *The Edge of Tomorrow* (Publisher unknown, 1958), p. unknown.
4. Hanley, p. 25.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 27.
6. Edith Stein, *Life in a Jewish Family* (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1986), pp. 319-320.
7. *Ibid.* p. 332.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 335.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 336.
10. *Ibid.* p. 336.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 345.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 348.
13. *ibid.*, p. 350.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 360.
15. Oben, p. 17.
16. Hanley, p. 51.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
21. Edith Stein, *The Hidden Life* (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1992), pp. 95-96.
22. Oben, p. 45.
23. Hanley, p. 30.
24. Edith Stein, *Paths to Interior Silence* (Source unknown).



*Hail Cross,
Our Only Hope'*

UNTIL JESUS BE FORMED IN YOU: A Marian Short Story

Sr. Mary of the Sacred Heart, O.P.
Marbury, AL

The faint whir of wings drew Sister Marie Genevieve's attention away from the book on her desk. She glanced up and watched as a hummingbird visited the feeder outside her window. Shimmering heat waves were already rising from the pavement in the cloister garth and the day promised to be another scorcher. Sister felt her spirits sag. She sighed silently as she turned her attention back to her reading. "...so that with unveiled faces they may reflect the glory of the Lord and be transformed into His image from splendor to splendor by the Spirit of the Lord." "From splendor to splendor," Sister lamented to herself. "All I seem to do is go from struggle to struggle."

"My daughter, what is troubling you?" came a gentle voice behind her. Startled Sister whirled around to see who it could be. Her mouth fell open and she stared in stunned amazement. Standing before her were St. Catherine of Siena and St. Dominic. Sister closed her eyes and shook her head to wake herself up — she must have fallen asleep! She cautiously opened them again and found herself surrounded by a soft glowing light. The loving expressions of her visitors filled her heart with inexplicable warmth.

"My sister, do not be afraid," encouraged St. Catherine. "Tell us what is troubling you."

Still a bit dubious, she took a deep breath and slowly began to open her heart.

"Well, to begin with, I feel so discouraged! Each day I struggle with myriad vexations and annoyances. Being enclosed with the same people day after day gets more and more difficult."

"Do not be discouraged, my daughter," said St. Dominic. "The enclosure I wish all my children to dwell in is the breadth, length, height and depth of the love of God. From this enclosure you must strive to see the Holy Spirit working out His plan of holiness through the vexations and annoyances you meet with."

"I do know that everything that happens comes from God in order that we can become holy," replied Sister. "But when the opportunities come I lose sight of it and get all upset."

"My dearest Sister," counseled St. Catherine. "Ask the assistance of the gentle, sweet Mary. It is her task to teach us the secret of perfect love — that is, how to unite our wills to God's will at every moment. With her help you will find it not only easier but delightful to submit to the actions of the Holy Spirit."

"And that is why we have come," continued St. Dominic. "We have obtained a special favor for you. Today you will be aware of Our Lady's help as you go about your day."

At that moment the clock began striking 9:00A.M. Instantly the vision faded, leaving only the gray walls of her cell. Sister closed her book and stood up. For a few brief moments she remained engrossed in her experience. "My goodness," she told herself, "What a dream, for surely it must be a dream! My, but wouldn't it be wonderful if it were true."

Turning toward the door, she made an effort to bring herself back to reality. What was she supposed to be doing now? Oh, yes. That pile of correspondence waiting for her on her desk! She strode up the hall toward her work room, anxious to get right to work. Switching on the computer as she entered the room, she headed for her desk and began thumbing through the pile of mail. Suddenly a loud pop shattered the silence. To her horror she saw acrid smoke pouring out of the monitor. "Oh, goodness!" she thought as she quickly switched it off. "I'll never get the mail done this way. Hmmm. Perhaps one of the other computers is free." She hurried out of the room and down toward the Prioress' office to acquaint her with the problem.

A cheery "come-in" answered her knock. The Prioress looked up expectantly as she entered. Before she could say a word, however, the phone rang. Picking up the receiver, the Prioress made her a sign she would see her after the phone call. "Oh, goodness. I would surely like to get that mail done," she thought as she headed back down the hall. "At least I can work on the sewing till Mother is ready." She had gone barely a few feet when another door opened and out came Sister Bertilla with a concerned look on her face. When she saw Sister Marie Genevieve her countenance brightened.

"Oh Sister!" she exclaimed. "Are you very busy right now?"

"No, not really," Sister managed to say with a smile.

"Oh, good! My helper, Sister Diane, has gone to the parlor and I have a huge pile of bed sheets to fold. Could you help me please? I'm sure it will take only a few minutes."

"Certainly, I would be glad to" Sister replied. She tried to smother her growing anxiety and frustration. "Goodness, but this day is getting off to a lousy start," she grumbled to herself as they worked. Suddenly she felt a presence and the same warm feeling she had earlier in her cell. Closing her eyes to ward off any more "Visions," she was astonished to "see" Our Lady smiling at her. She opened her eyes quickly and was relieved to see only Sister Bertilla. "Goodness, maybe...could it be...?" She closed her eyes again to "see" if Mary were still there. Yes, she was! A bit ruefully she realized she had already forgotten her resolution. "I'm sorry, dear Mother," she prayed. "Dominus est. I **do** want what God wills for me." They had just finished the folding the bedclothes when her beeper went off, so she dashed off to the Prioress' office again.

The Prioress smiled at her as she walked in and said, "Well, Sister what can I do for you?"

Sister began, "When I turned on the computer to do the mail this morning the monitor burned out. I was wondering..." BRRRING! Brrring! The intercom interrupted her explanation. The Prioress picked it up.

"Thank you, Sister," she said as she hung up the receiver and began to move toward the door. "I'm sorry Sister, but can you put this on hold a while longer? Dr. Welch is here and I really must go. I **will** get back to you as soon as I can."

Sister Marie Genevieve watched her leave, disappointment welling up inside her. "If that mail weren't so important, it wouldn't be so aggravating," Sister thought. "Well, I guess it's back to the sewing." She headed for the sewing room. Suddenly she almost bumped into Sister Mary Gertrude who was coming up the stairs.

"Oh, Sister, you are just the one I am looking for. Sister Albert, my helper, is with the Doctor right now, and I need someone to help me form the bread. The Prioress said I could ask you since your computer isn't working."

Sister Marie Genevieve felt her annoyance rising. "How nice of the Prioress to volunteer my services," she began to complain to herself. "It isn't exactly as if I had nothing else to do." Once again she felt the presence of Our Lady. "Oh, dear Mother, here I go again. I do want to accept this as God's will for me right now. Please help me!" she prayed as she followed Sister Gertrude to the kitchen. The warm, cheery atmosphere of the kitchen helped her relax. "Goodness," she thought, "I never realized how set I have become in trying to get things done when I want them done. No wonder I get so irritated at every interruption. Maybe the Lord has been trying to tell me this all along."

Soon the bread was finished. It was also time for Sister Marie Genevieve's adoration so she made her way to the chapel. She noticed the Prioress was in as she passed her office and knocked on the door. Fortunately she was able to explain her predicament without another incident. "How soon do you think it will be before we can get it fixed?" she asked.

The Prioress answered: "It's hard to tell. Mr. Bertrand is on his vacation but maybe his secretary will be able to help us in some way. You can give her a call when you get a chance." Sister thanked her and turned to go.

"Oh, Sister," the Prioress called after her, "this afternoon would you please show Sister Mary Augustine the next step on the sewing. She is very anxious to learn. I was sure you wouldn't mind helping her."

"No, I don't mind," Sister answered. But outside the door she began to frown as she went to the chapel. "Sister Mary Augustine! That's all I need to ruin the rest of the day. I love her but...! If she weren't always coming up with all these bright ideas I wouldn't object in the least to helping her...." "My child," chided a motherly voice in her soul. Dominus est!" "Oh, dear Mother," cried Sister Marie Genevieve. "You know what a difficult time I have with Sister, but — if that is what God wills for me, then I do want to accept it. Please **do** stay with me and help me."

After dinner, as she was helping to clean up the kitchen, she began to ponder the events of the morning. "My goodness, how different difficult situations look when you begin to see them as God's will. Up till now I've only seen them as something to be endured. It is so easy to get into a rut of **doing** things for God. I've forgotten to see God's love in all that happens. How glad I am Our Lady is helping me to see this. I'm

sure I must have heard this in the novitiate, but how easy it is to let other things drive it out of our memory. My goodness!"

After the dishes she went to meet Sister Monica at the West door. The two of them shared a garden plot and were looking forward to pulling out some weeds that day. They were just about to go out when Sister Mary Damian and Sister Mary Peter came on the scene.

"Where are you going?" they asked.

"We're just going to pull some weeds," said Sister Monica

"Oh, it's way too hot outside," said Sister Mary Damian. "Why not come and play a game of cards with us. We'll help you pull weeds another day."

"Sure, sounds like fun," said Sister Monica. Sister Marie Genevieve really didn't care for card games, but it was rather hot outside. The four of them traipsed up the stairs to the recreation room chatting cheerfully. The game got off to a good start. Then Sister Mary Damian remarked with a smile:

"It must have been a very lovely ecstasy you were having in the kitchen Sister Marie Genevieve."

"Ecstasy?" questioned Sister, surprised.

"Why, yes, you were going around the room like someone in a dream. You didn't even notice you put the coffee pot in the refrigerator."

Everyone laughed, and Sister Mary Genevieve said "I guess I was a bit buried in my thoughts."

"That reminds me," interrupted Sister Mary Peter.

"Oh, oh," everyone groaned teasingly. Experience told them what to expect next. Sister Mary Peter never missed an opportunity to give a tidbit on St. Thérèse. Good-natured Sister Mary Peter ignored their groans, however, and continued with her story: "St. Thérèse used to tell the novices...."

Usually Sister Marie Genevieve listened to these anecdotes absentmindedly. After all, hadn't they all read St. Thérèse? But today she decided: "This will be a good opportunity to keep my resolution of accepting all things with love. Our Lady certainly would listen with all her attention. And who knows — I might get something out of this."

All too soon it was time for recreation to end. As they went to their cells Sister Mary Genevieve reflected: "My goodness, St. Thérèse's advice to her novices is the same as St. Dominic and St. Catherine's. I have forgotten a lot more than I realized. How easy it is to get wrapped up in **things!**"

After mid-afternoon prayer, Sister breathed a quick prayer to Our Lady before leaving the Chapel. She was definitely going to need her help in working with Sister Mary Augustine. When she arrived at the sewing room, she found Sister already there. She showed Sister how to measure and pin the habit hems, and then how to sew them. After that, she left Sister to do the sewing, while she settled down to finish pinning and measuring. Presently Sister Mary Augustine was standing by Sister's elbow.

"Listen," she said, "I just got this brilliant idea. The machine already has the inches marked on the front, so instead of all that measuring and pinning, I thought we could just sit down and start sewing, using the measurements on the machine for our guide."

"Well, I don't know," Sister Mary Genevieve countered. "We have never done it that way."

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained!" Sister interjected. "Just think of all the time it could save us."

"I really don't think it would work."

"How do you know until you try? Just let me try one. I'm sure it will work."

"It probably is a great idea, Sister," Sister Marie Genevieve began, "but I..."

"Oh thanks, Sister! I'll try the next one right away," Sister Mary Augustine exclaimed. A little piqued, Sister Mary Genevieve thought, "Well, let her find out the hard way." After a few minutes Sister Mary Augustine stood up to display the finished habit. But her smile turned to a look of dismay.

"Good grief! Something went wrong somewhere." She frowned at the crooked and uneven hem. Just then the Prioress walked in.

"It certainly did. However did you manage this?" she inquired.

Sister Mary Augustine explained. "Sister and I thought it might be faster to sew the hems without taking time to pin them. I guess we still have to do a little more practicing."

"Never mind," said the Prioress, "I think you had better continue pinning them first. Whatever time you save from pinning you'll have to use to rip out all those seams. Now Sister Mary Augustine, I need you for a few minutes in my office please." The Prioress glanced at Sister Marie Genevieve as she turned to go.

"Sister's brilliant ideas **are** hard to resist, I know. But I do think it might be better if we did at times, don't you?"

The door closed and Sister Marie Genevieve felt herself burning with annoyance. Angry thoughts swirled through her mind and tears stung her eyes. Putting down her sewing she prayed mightily not to give in to them. The comforting presence of Our Lady surrounded her and she closed her eyes. Though she could not see Mary, she poured out her anguish to her: "Dear Mother, I am so upset. How could Sister put all the blame on me and ruin my reputation like that? I can just imagine what the Prioress thinks of me now. How can this be a gift of love from God?"

"My dearest child, do not worry about your reputation. The Holy Spirit is working to cut all attachments to self in you. How else can Jesus be formed in you? Offer it to Him in love and thank Him for this gift."

Sister pondered these words for a moment. "I think I am beginning to understand, dear Mother. Yes, thank you, dear God for this gift. I do offer it to you with all my heart." Though her heart was still a bit sore, she felt much peace.

The rest of the day passed without episode. Later, on her way to the Chapel to do her *Lectio*, she passed by the Prioress' office. She felt a strong urge to stop in and explain the whole situation but she resisted it. "No," she told herself. "I really want this to be a total gift to Jesus. It won't be if I take anything back, especially by giving in that way to my desire that others think well of me." A deep joy flooded her whole being and she felt as if a heavy burden had been lifted from her. "Now," she thought, "I begin to understand how St. Dominic could sing during his times of trials and tribulations."

During evening recreation Sister Monica remarked to her: "My, but you look radiant. You must have had a great day."

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Sister, "I had a wonderful day!" and thought to herself: "If you only knew!"

Later as Sister settled herself in bed she thought: "Yes, it was truly a splendid day — 'persevering in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus!'" A soft light filled her cell. St. Dominic and St. Catherine appeared once more, accompanied this time by Our Lady. She could only smile at them with a heart overflowing with gratitude. She closed her eyes, but Our Lady's serene countenance remained. "Thank you, dear Mother, for being with me today," she whispered. Mary's answered resounded in her heart:

"I am always with you, my daughter. You have only to call on me." The realization that Our Lady would indeed be with her at all times caused her heart to sing "Magnificat!" as she drifted off to sleep.

▷◁

FAITH, THEOLOGY, AND CONTEMPLATION

Sr. Daria, O.P.
North Guilford, CT

What place has theological study in the life of a contemplative? This has been a contested question in the history of monasticism. Some traditions have regarded any sustained excursion into speculative reason with suspicion, as a distraction from the simple and affective impulse of prayer. For a Dominican, however, theology and contemplation, though distinct, can never be opposed. In order to reach the goal which is the kingdom of God, Cassian says, we aim at a mark, which is purity of heart or constant prayer (that is, contemplation), and undertake all the practices which help us to attain it. Aquinas asks whether there are various activities in the contemplative life, and answers that "the contemplative life has only one activity in which it finally terminates and from which it derives its unity, namely the contemplation of truth, but it has several activities by which it arrives at this final activity."¹ These activities include the discursive reasoning of theology, which is thus dispositively part of the contemplative life.² Theology and contemplation, then, are different moments of one flight to God which proceeds from the gift of faith, is shaped by one end, and is impelled and perfected by one love.

The act of contemplation, in itself, differs from that of theology in that it is more of an intuitive loving gaze at the truth grasped than a discursive investigation of it. There is a time when the discursus of reason must cease, so that "the soul's gaze may be fixed on the simple contemplation of intelligible truth."³ The experience of contemplation eludes description, but while still an activity of the intellect (because its object is truth) it is marked by a delight which draws the loving knower to want to be united to the substance, not merely the idea, of its object.⁴ It is an experiential knowledge, an operation of wisdom, which relishes the truth.

As wisdom can either be acquired or received as a supernatural gift, Aquinas distinguishes different types of contemplation, the highest being the mystical contemplation which is an operation of the infused wisdom given by the Holy Spirit. In mystical contemplation, or rapture, it may actually happen that a person reaches a vision of God's essence; Aquinas attributes this experience to St. Paul. In this rare state contemplation goes beyond faith to the light of glory.⁵

Nevertheless, in this life, contemplation does not ordinarily attain the vision of the divine essence which it seeks.⁶ In the normal course of things, contemplation, like theology, is an activity which proceeds from faith. Therefore, it has the characteristics of faith-knowledge. It is directed towards God as First Truth, the formal object of faith.⁷ To speak in this way of God as an object, as T. C. O'Brien points out, is only

describe his graciousness in making himself accessible to us through the theological virtues.⁸

Faith-knowledge is marked by both certitude and incompleteness. Certitude, because of the grace of assent, and incompleteness because faith is not vision. The truth known by faith is "known according to the knower" — although First Truth is simple, we know it in a complex fashion.⁹ In theology our knowledge is contained in propositions, and even contemplation is not an act of simple apprehension like the angels, but a judgement of the understanding.¹⁰ Outside of the direct beatific vision, which on earth was natural only to Christ (who alone was habitually both *comprehensor* and *viator*¹¹), contemplation, like theology, is an activity of *viatores* — those who are on the way.

Therefore, contemplation is enriched by theology because it depends on the truths given in revelation, on signs and likenesses which fall short of the direct knowledge of God, although "the believer presses past them to assent to God himself."¹² Theology prepares for contemplation by reaching out to a fuller knowledge of these divine truths, and is therefore a means to the goal of the love of God, who as infinitely good is more loved the more he is known. In working out the science of our salvation, theology elucidates the truth which is enjoyed in contemplation. For Aquinas, "theology (is) subordinate to faith, itself subordinate to the vision of the blessed."¹³

The interplay of knowing and loving which make theology a preparation for contemplation also make contemplation the fulfilment of theology. Because of our rational nature we delight in the truth; God who is Truth has made us for himself. As an activity of faith, theology is prompted and completed by love. It rests on belief, the proper act of faith, which though it takes place in the intellect, is a "pondering with assent,"¹⁴ that reaches out to the reality assented to; the intellect is first moved by the will.¹⁵

Faith terminates not in propositions but in the reality;¹⁶ it is not just a mental activity but the start of a personal relationship with God which is a response to grace.¹⁷ Faith, and theology as an activity of faith, are perfected by the complete adherence of love.¹⁸ Love and knowledge become mutually inclusive, charity actually joining us to God and opening us to receive the Gifts of the Spirit (Understanding, Knowledge, and Wisdom) which allow us to reach a perception of divine truth by grace which goes beyond that possible by natural reason.¹⁹ So the love which belongs to contemplation can lift the theologian to a deeper, experiential grasp of the truth. Although it is possible to do theology without a faith fully formed by charity, it would be imperfect and lacking the connaturality with divine truths that is part of the gift of Wisdom.²⁰

As theology leads into contemplation, pondering with assent becomes a dialogue between us and the Word, a Word not so much of information as of invitation.²¹ The Word spoken by First Truth in revelation discloses God's very presence, a presence that comes to dwell in us by a continual mutual invitation. In this

dialogue both theology and contemplation have their moment in making us a welcome home for the Word. Nowhere is this more evident than in the liturgy, which is the deepest expression of the Church's union with the Lord, as well as the richest resource of theological tradition.²² The liturgy is the ecclesial form of contemplation. In it, the wayfaring Church on earth gazes at the mysteries of divine truth in company with the blessed in heaven who through love have attained the vision of God. In tasting the beauty of the Reality encountered, the Church penetrates further into its mysteries. As Odo Casel expressed it, "It is not only study but the act of fully sharing the life of Christ *in mysterio* [in the mystery] which is the final source of all knowledge."²³

Why should one who seeks a contemplative life study theology? Because, as Thomas Gilby puts it, "...theology (is) a function of being in love with God."²⁴ For us whose vision is incomplete, theology helps to see the way. And, because Christ is both the way and the goal,²⁵ love compels us to make the journey.

*"My joy is the Lord and my course is toward him;
this path of mine is beautiful"*

— Odes of Solomon (7)

▷◁

NOTES

1. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, vol. 46, 2a, 2ae, 180, 3; ed. Blackfriars (New York: McGraw Hill, 1966), 23.
2. Aquinas, 23.
3. *ST*, 2a, 2ae, 180, 6, 2.
4. *ST*, 2a, 2ae, 180, 7.
5. *ST*, 2a, 2ae, 175, 4 and 180, 5.
6. *ST*, 2a, 2ae, 180, 5.
7. Jordan Aumann ed., Blackfriars' *Summa*, vol. 46, footnote to 2a, 2ae, 180, 5.
8. T. C. O'Brien, ed., Blackfriars' *Summa*, vol. 31, Appendix 1, "Objects and Virtues," p. 184.
9. *ST*, 2a, 2ae, 1, 2.
10. Aumann, footnote to 2a, 2ae, 180, 3, p. 23.
11. *ST*, 2a, 2ae, 175, 4, 2.
12. Thomas Gilby, Blackfriars' *Summa*, vol. 1, Appendix 7, "Revelation," p. 94.
13. Gilby, footnote to 1a, 1, 2, p. 11.
14. *ST*, 2a, 2ae, 2, 1.
15. O'Brien, Appendix 3, "Faith and the Truth About God," pp. 203 and 210. Cf. Aquinas, *De Veritate*, XIV, 1.
16. *ST*, 2a, 2ae, 1, 2.
17. O'Brien, Appendix 4, "Belief: Faith's Act," p. 211.

18. O'Brien, Appendix 2, "Faith and the Truth Who Is God," p. 192. Cf. *ST*, 2a, 2ae, 4,3.
19. Gilby, Appendix 10, "The Dialectic of Love in the *Summa*," p. 131. Cf. *ST*, 2a, 2ae, 45.
20. Aumann, Appendix 4, "Theology and Contemplation," p. 112-113. Cf. *ST*, 2a, 2ae, 45, 2-4.
21. Gilby, Appendix 7, "Revelation," p. 88.
22. Aidan Nichols, *The Shape of Catholic Theology* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 183.
23. Cited in Andre Gozier, *Dom Casel* (Paris: Fleurus, 1968).
24. Gilby, Appendix 6, "Theology as Science," p. 86.
25. Aquinas, *Commentary on John*, Chap. 14, lec. 2.

Reflection on an image from St. Augustine

DESCUBRIMIENTO¹

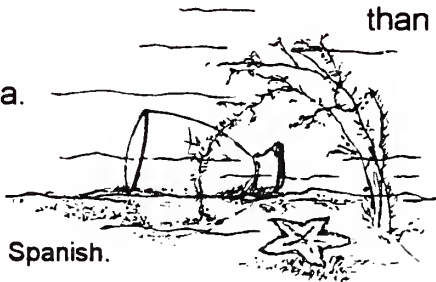
Todo el Mar
no está en el vasito,
pero todo el vasito
ya está en el Mar.

Y por eso, el vasito
no puede hacer nada más
que conocer
muy bien
al Agua.

DISCOVERY

All of the Sea
is not in the glass,
but all of the glass
is now in the Sea.

And so the little glass
can do nothing more
than to know,
intimately,
the Water.



— Sr. Mary Dominic, O.P.
Elmira, NY

¹ The original poem is the Spanish.

THE PROOF IS IN THE PUDDING:

ST. BERNARD OF CLAIRVAUX, PETER ABELARD AND ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

Sister Mary Emmanuel, O.P.
Buffalo, NY

The faith of the early medievals feasted on what history has called the tradition of monastic theology. By that method one appealed to the authority of scripture and the Church fathers in a way that called forth an affective response in the believer. This approach, along with the conviction that the believer's faith was an established reality, left little room in the minds of its adherents for philosophical investigation. St. Bernard, abbot of Clairvaux (1090 - 1153), manifested extraordinary enthusiasm in defence of this tradition.

Issues that tended to threaten this tranquil atmosphere erupted with amazing arrogance and brashness in the person of Peter Abelard (1079 - 1142), philosopher and theologian. This volcanic young student publicly routed many of the arguments of his teachers, William of Champeaux and Anselm of Laon, both of whom ranked highly in the university world. In addition, contrary to the convention of the time, he audaciously set up his own independent school of learning where scores of disciples avidly devoured his teachings and writings.

Yes, Abelard taught, wrote, — and shocked.

Imagine the theological indigestion suffered by Abelard's opponents upon reading his book on the Trinity, for instance. This book boasted bold dialectical arguments which seemed to them to call into question the very mystery the author proposed to expound. Their opposition was further fueled by the blatant absence of traditional patristic references so dear to their method of explicating the faith.

In another work, *Sic et non*, Abelard cleverly juxtaposed contradictory elements from biblical and patristic sources — obviously meant as a caustic response to his accusers.

Bernard and his party opposed Abelard's theological fare with a menu of accusation directed toward various perceived crimes. For instance they accused him of equating faith with opinion; introducing heretical opinions; trying to imprison God in a syllogism by using dialectics in connection with supernatural truths — a process that seemed to reduce those truths to a merely human level; and teaching that Christ's life and death were "for no other purpose than that he might teach us how to live by his words and example." ¹ Concerning the Godhead they charged him with confusing common attributes of the Trinity with properties specific to each of the Three Persons; and ignoring the scriptures and fathers as sources of teaching, especially regarding the mystery of the Trinity.

In response Abelard insisted on his good intentions. He deemed it necessary, he said, to discuss "the fundamental principles of our faith in the light of human reason" for the sake of his disciples "who demanded human and philosophical reasons and demonstrations rather than affirmations."² In defence of *Sic et non* he asserted his aim was to "arouse the reader and draw him to an inquiry into the truth, all the more so when the authority of Scripture itself is given greater emphasis."³

Already in 1121 the Council of Soissons had condemned Abelard's teachings on the Trinity. Then twenty years later the Council of Sens drew up and condemned fourteen errors. They sent these to the Pope who also condemned them at the insistent entreaties of Bernard.

Towards the end of his life Abelard wrote: "I do not want to be a philosopher at the price of being rejected by Paul; nor yet an Aristotle at the price of being rejected by Christ; for there is no other name under heaven whereby I can be saved. I adore Christ reigning at the Father's right hand. With the arms of faith I embrace him working divinely in that glorious virginal flesh which he received of the Holy [Spirit]."⁴

Abelard's contemptuous attitude and surprisingly unclear statements radically hindered his own cause. After his death, some of the better of his disciples managed to clear his name in the case of certain of his works and methods that had obviously been misunderstood. One felicitous outcome was that scholars began to accept rigorous philosophical investigation as a salutary contribution to the study of theology.

During the century following Abelard's death, many scholars continued to frequent his table of dialectic philosophy. St. Thomas Aquinas (1224 - 1274), ranking among those prudently sated, rose to combine successfully and skillfully the best of Abelardian technique with his own indefatigable pursuit of profound theological truth — a happy blend perhaps best savored in his *Summa Theologiae*.

If Abelard had foreseen this outcome, would he have rejoiced at his own contribution to the many-coursed meal provided by the Angel of the Schools?

Had Bernard the honey-mouthed lived to see Aquinas' day would he have heeded the call of Wisdom to "come and eat" (cf. Proverbs 9:5) at such a **sacred banquet**? ▷◁

NOTES

1. Bernard of Clairvaux, *Treatise Against Several Erroneous Chapters by Peter Abelard*, in *Patrologia Latina*, Vol 182 (Paris: Garnier Freres, 1897), col. 1067; quoted in Placher, William C., *A History of Christian Theology, an Introduction* (Louisville: The Westminster Press, 1983), 147.
2. James, Bruno S., *St. Bernard of Clairvaux*, (New York, 1957), 135, 136.
3. Abelard, Peter, *Sic et non* pr. (Boyer-McKeon), 104; Quoted in Pelikan, Jaroslav, *The Christian Tradition, A History of the Development of Doctrine*, Vol 3 (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 224.
4. James, *op. cit.*, 141.

THE STATE OF THOMISM TODAY

Sr. Mary Catharine, O.P.
Summit, NJ

One needs only to glance at book catalogues to know that all areas of medieval studies are of great interest today. New translations are regularly appearing and are welcome. Twenty years ago such interest would have been unthinkable.

Forty years ago, it was feared that the death knell had sounded for Thomism. Perhaps it did for the Neo-Thomism that flourished from the time of Leo XIII to the eve of Vatican Council II. In Catholic colleges and seminaries the *Summa Theologiae* as the staple for theology was replaced by new ways of thinking and talking about God. One of my sisters in the community recounts that her first contact with St. Thomas was in a literature course while at a Dominican college in the early eighties. St. Thomas's treatment of envy was explored in the context of a discussion on Shakespeare.

To ask the question, "What is the state of Thomism today?" is in some ways to ask the wrong question. One might also ask, "Which school of Thomism?" History aptly shows us that the thought of St. Thomas is too vast, too all-embracing, to be encompassed into one way of thinking, a marvelous character of the Order itself. To be truly familiar with St. Thomas one also has to be firmly rooted in sources that are the foundation of his teaching. Obviously this means a familiarity with Plato and Aristotle but also includes patristic sources, particularly Augustine, Oriental philosophers, the *Sentences* of Peter Lombard, and, what sometimes seems to have been forgotten, Scripture itself. Perhaps one dominant note of the renewal of Thomism today is that it is coupled with a return to the sources leading to an emphasis not so much on texts that hand down a "judgment", but an emphasis on the timelessness of a theology that can be applied to any age.

Thomas O'Meara, O.P., in his book *St. Thomas Aquinas, Theologian*, suggests: "Jose Pinto de Olivera and Otto Pesch are not alone in thinking that Vatican II had set Aquinas's theology free for new accomplishments."¹ In 1974 Paul VI issued a commemorative letter for the seventh centenary of the death of Thomas, highlighting the "realism and objectivity of his thought."² A new interest in the theology of Thomas was beginning to reinsert itself but in a way that freed it from the structures of neo-scholasticism.

The emphasis of Vatican II on a positive view of humanity, on the role of the Holy Spirit, on the primacy of the law of the Gospel, and on the activity of grace, seems to

have contributed to opening the door to new studies, resources and publications on Thomistic theology. Recent major studies by scholars such as Otto Pesch and Jean-Pierre Torrell are replacing (in some cases) some of the older and often “drier” studies of earlier Thomism. New technological innovations open new possibilities for research as CD’s containing indices of all of St. Thomas’s works and secondary literature are made available. The recent mushrooming of the Internet will most likely provide (if it hasn’t already) a forum for interchange unthought of by previous ages.

There is also a renewed interest in the ethics and moral theology of St. Thomas, particularly in applying his teaching to a rising concern for the area of medical ethics. Introductory texts such as *The Primacy of Love* by Paul J. Wadell, C.P., and *Ethica Thomistica* by Ralph McInerney, have contributed much to present the Thomistic view of the moral life to a generation totally ignorant of the goldmine present in St. Thomas on the ethics of virtue. Servais Pinckaers, O.P., in *The Sources of Christian Ethics* (now translated into English), presents moral theology that is rooted in the ultimate law of the Gospel of Christ. He repeatedly insists that St. Thomas must be read and interpreted anew and he states that his aim is to “return Christian ethics to its sources: Scripture, the Holy Spirit, the Gospel law, and natural law, which is rooted in freedom itself.”³

What Thomism will bring to the future remains to be seen. Given the present “pulse points” one would hope that this renewed study of St. Thomas would lead to that which St. Thomas himself held so dear — both a greater understanding of the beauty and value of the human person who with grace is drawn to the depths of God’s Love made incarnate in Jesus Christ, and a fuller realization of the goal of all human existence, i.e., eternal beatitude, caught in the joy of the face to face vision of God.

▷◁

NOTES

1. Thomas O’Meara, O.P., *St. Thomas Aquinas, Theologian* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 246.

2. *Ibid.*, 198.

3. Servais Pinckaers, O.P., *The Sources of Christian Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1995), xxi.

INTRODUCTION: AUTHOR INDEX

Now that *Dominican Monastic Search* is approaching its twentieth year of publication, and recognizing the richness of the articles that have appeared over these years, it seems helpful to have access to these writings. Therefore, this issue of *DMS* contains an **AUTHOR INDEX** to articles by nuns and friars published in *DMS* from 1980 to 1998.

Some editorial comments might be helpful:

1. There is an issue of *DMS* for every year **except** 1981 and 1988. Two issues appeared in 1989, one of which contains the presentations of the 1988 Assembly. Thus, in the Index, **88A** refers to the issue containing these papers, while **88** designates the regular 1988 edition of *DMS*.

2. The **1982** issue of *DMS* appeared as a supplement to the **February, 1983** issue of *Conference Communications*.

3. Articles that are translations by a nun are entered under the nun-translator, with a cross reference from the original author to the translator.

4. Authors are entered under their present (1998) name and monastery, with a cross reference from a previous religious name and monastery.

5. The entries are in alphabetical order by nun, followed by an alphabetical list of her articles, and their location, *i.e.*, **94:102-108** means that the article will be found in the **1994** issue of *DMS*, on **pages 102-108**.

A **SUBJECT INDEX** to these articles is in the planning stage. In preparation for that I welcome your comments, corrections, and suggestions about this present Index.

Please allow me to express my grateful appreciation to the assistance I have received from several sisters.

Sr. Susan Early, OP
Our Lady of Grace Monastery
North Guilford, CT.



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(1998)

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